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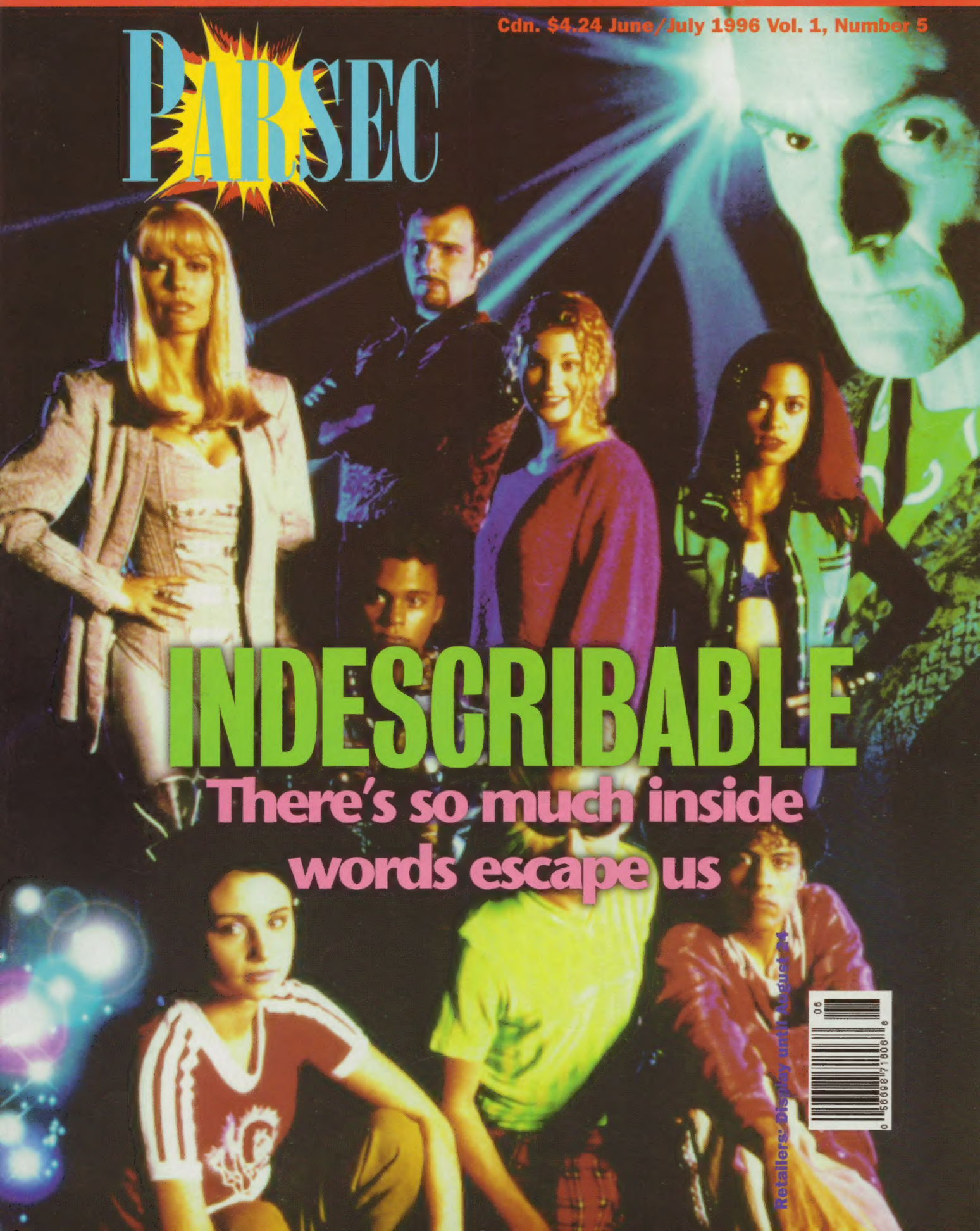
Cdn. $4.24 June/July 1996 Vol. 1, Number 5



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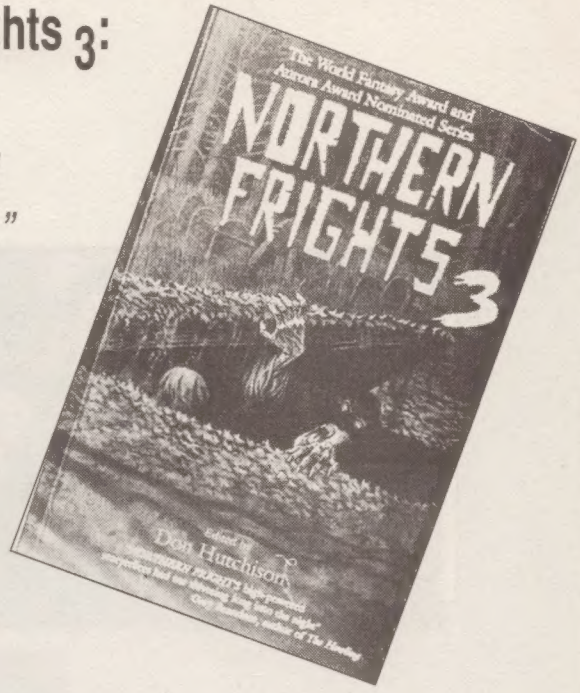

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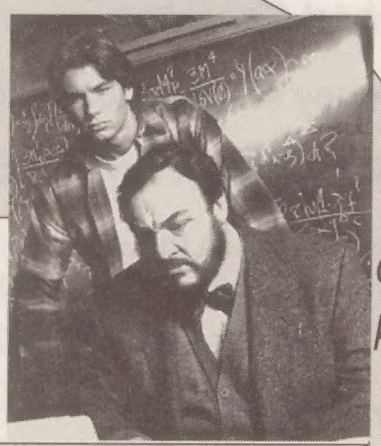

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PARSEC

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 6
JUNE/JULY 1996

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Cover photo courtesy of New World Films. Artwork on page 4 courtesy of New World Films. Doctor Who is copyright © of BBC

Parsec, volume 1 number 6
June/July 1996
UPC — 56698-71606-06
Parsec is published bi-monthly by Parsec Publishing Company, Unit G. Suite 108, 1942 Regent St., Sudbury, Ont., Canada, P3E 3Z9

Parsec is published each August, October, December, February, April and June.

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Subscription rate (not including applicable taxes): one year — $25.50, two years — $51.

For advertising information please call (705) 523-1831 or fax (705) 523-5276.
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Just how would you categorize this?

During the middle of July, science fiction, fantasy and horror enthusiasts will gather in Calgary for what has become an annual tradition — the Aurora Awards.

In the 15 years of its existence, the award has gained in stature. While it lacks the long storied past of the Hugo or the clout (at least among American writers) as its southern cousin, the Nebula, the Aurora has become *the* award for science fiction and fantasy writers, publishers, fans, et al.

The growth in the award's stature has been mirrored by the explosion of Canada's contribution to the genres of science fiction and fantasy. This year, a record 198 nominations were received by the nominations committee — 35 more than the previous record set last year. If there was ever a gauge of the genres' popularity and potential in Canada, the Aurora Awards are it and rightfully so.

But looking over the list of finalists, it seems clear that some changes to qualifications might be in order. If nothing else, a clear understanding of works can be considered. You just have to look under the category "Best Other Works In English" to see that changes might be in order.

Besides Northern Frights$_3$ and TransVersions there is ReBoot and the National Library of Canada's Out of this World exhibit. A cartoon (oops, sorry animation) and a museum exhibit.

As laudable as these last two projects are and as great as they are in their respective areas, should they be considered for Aurora Awards. Of course, but, they shouldn't be placed in the same category as literary works. ReBoot is an excellent example of leading-edge animation, but should it be considered for a science fiction award? If it should, then an animation category should be created. But I'm more than a little uncomfortable that a cartoon gains a nomination while a literary digest such as On Spec is left out in the cold (Although Tesseract Books' anthology: On Spec the First Five Years, The On Spec Editorial Collective, is among the finalists). I would hate to see Northern Frights or TransVersions lose out to the National Library's exhibit. Despite the worthiness of the exhibit for some sort of recognition, it would be like comparing apples to oranges when it comes to fans who fill out their ballots. And I am sure neither Mosaic Press and editor Don Hutchison at Northern Frights$_3$ nor Sally McBride and the gang at TransVersions have the resources at their disposal that the National Library does.

If nothing else, the "Other" category seems to be a catch-all for any project that is not a book or short story. And that needs to be corrected.

I'd like to suggest that if productions such as ReBoot must be considered (and they should) then the 1997 awards include an animation category — with BLT Productions, Nelvana, Lacewood Productions and numerous small animation houses dotting the country, there's plenty of Canadian productions that could qualify for inclusion. And in the case of events such as the Out of This World exhibit, then the creation of some sort of achievement award or a special merit award may be an option.

This would eliminate the catch-all aspect of the "Other" categories, which could then be restricted to literary works such as magazines, digests or anthologies. It's just a thought.

The Aurora Awards are a tremendous undertaking and the volunteers that have spent a great deal of their waking lives during the past year making the awards a reality deserve a round of applause for the event's success — and its growth. Their efforts epitomize the true nature of Canadian science fiction, fantasy and horror fans.

❑❑❑

We are publishing a copy of the Aurora Award ballot on page 40. If you would like to cast your vote, simply cut out or photocopy the ballot and mail to the address on that page.

Parsec would like to congratulate the finalists and wish them all the very best. Looking over the roster of finalists it is clear, they truly are the best Canadian science fiction, fantasy and horror has to offer.

— Chris

Growing pains aside, Parsec is worth it

Dear Parsec,

In the letters to the editor in issue 4, you received a negative comment.

While I reluctantly admit that Cassandra Milan's comment hold a grain of truth, she's overlooked one very crucial point: that Parsec is the first magazine of its kind (SF media) in Canada.

This alone is quite significant. It signals the growth of Canadian SF in all its forms, especially media-based SF. With that in mind, Parsec has single-handedly captured the national market in that field and proves that Canadian SF is growing.

As maintainer of the Canadian SF&F Resource Guide, I see new information coming in all the time.

If the Guide were used as a gauge for Canadian SF growth, one will quickly find out that there is an SF culture developing in our country.

Parsec is a big legitimizing factor of it, and is growing along with the Canadian SF scene.

Essentially, it's Parsec's sheer will, determination and spirit that impresses me. You've got my vote of confidence: Parsec *is* worth it, despite the growing pains!

Paul Neumann
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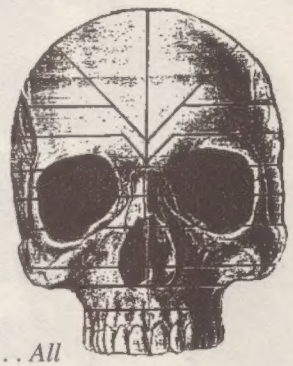

Dennis Valdron's "Viruses of Quiet Desperation" was by far my fave — nightmarish and thought-provoking. Definitely recommended — **Dead of Night**

Each one of these is a fascinating examination done in a very forthright and readable style . . . All in all, this is a pretty wonderful chapbook and I intend to keep my eyes open for Valdron's work in the future. I think you should as well. — **Scavengers**

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West Coast Weirdness

From mutants and time travellers to [illegible] and werewolves British [illegible] authors have had their hands full lately

The start of 1996 in Hollywood North brought several blessings to fans of science fiction and fantasy on television.

Besides new shooting schedules for the X-Files and the Outer Limits, the various production studios scattered around the Vancouver area had four new projects in the works.

First out of the chute was Generation X, which aired in late February with a special-effects-loaded two-hour pilot by Eric Blakeney. The pilot was brought to the air by MT2 Inc and Marvel Films and distributed by Marvel's sister company New World Entertainment.

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

The dream child of executive producers Stan Lee, Avi Arad, Bruce Sallan and Blakeney, Generation X was a live-action adaptation of the popular comic book. Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachald created the Generation X comic series — one of the many spinoffs from Lee's classic The X-Men series, which he conceived during the early 1960s.

At presstime, Fox Network had yet to decide whether or not to give the go-ahead for production of more Generation X episodes.

"The network is still thinking about it," Lee said. "The viewer reaction, for the most part, has been very good."

If Fox executives decide not to approve Generation X as a series, Lee says he is willing to consider independent syndication for the show.

"We won't let this thing die on the vine. It's too good."

The pilot, which was shot in and around Vancouver, was set in an America where humans may be born with latent superhuman abilities. These powers usually manifest themselves as part of an individual's physiological changes during puberty. It can be a grim world for anyone suspected of being a mutant. The U.S. federal government enforces a Mutant Registration Act and interns known mutants in "assimilation camps" for their own protection.

The Generation X pilot featured two secondary characters from the classic X-Men series. Emma "White Queen" Frost (Finola Hughes) and Sean "Banshee" Cassidy (Jeremy Ratchford) supervise the Xavier Institute, a facility which offers sanctuary and training opportunities for young people whose mutant abilities have begun to manifest.

Vancouver's Northwest Imaging and Special Effects spent 400 hours on making the mutant superpowers for the pilot. The dedication shows in the final product.

Advanced particle animation techniques gave Jubilation "Jubilee" Lee (Heather McComb) her pyrotechnic powers. Computer morphing allowed Angelo "Skin" Espinosa (Agustin Rodriguez) to stretch his various body parts at will and also helped create the dream dimension which the villain, rogue corporate scientist Russell Tresh (Matt Frewer), inhabits while he plots the destruction of the Xavier Institute's staff and students.

If Generation X gets the green light from Fox, Lee intends to explore the same

Finola Hughes (White Queen) and Toronto-based Jeremy Ratchford (Banshee) operate a school for wayward mutants on Generation X

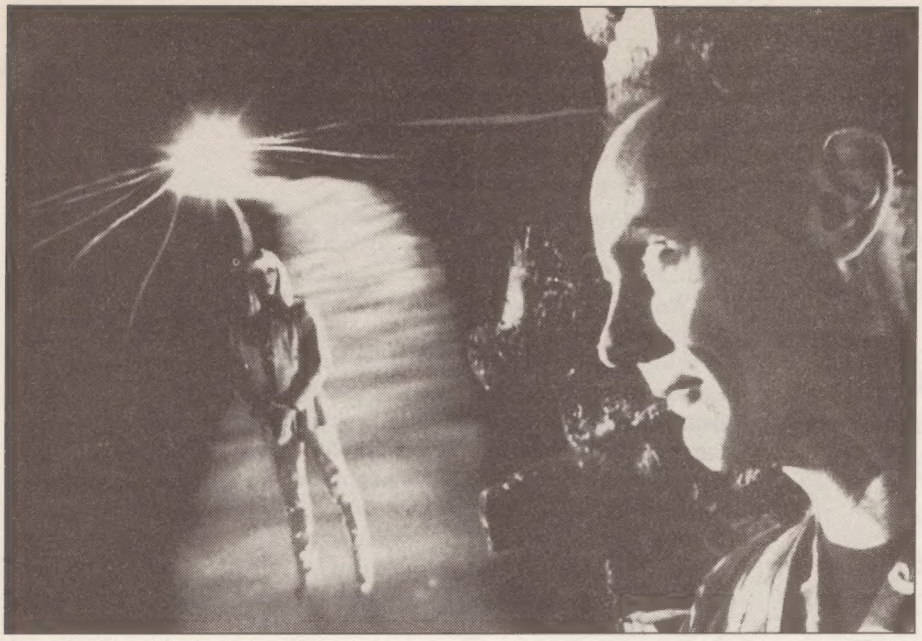

Photo courtesy of New World Entertainment

Scenes such as the battle between Emma Frost and Russell Tresh (Matt Frewer) in the astral plane, displays the expertise of Vancouver's Northwest Imaging.

themes that are the foundation of the X-Men comic books. Themes such as learning to recognize and deal with prejudice and accepting the need to sacrifice yourself for the greater good.

"That has always been the theme of the X-Men stories from the beginning," Lee said. "I'd like to think that theme shines through in everything we do."

The character of Arlee "Buff" Hicks (Suzanne Davis) symbolizes the two other themes which Lee would like the series to explore — those of teenage angst and learning to like yourself, even if you do not fit society's definition of perfection or normalcy.

Hicks' mutant ability is enhanced strength, a trait that would be a real benefit for a young woman in the dark and dangerous world of Generation X. The problem is that parts of her physique resemble those of a male bodybuilder, something the socially-insecure teenager tries to hide by wearing baggy clothes and backing away from any male who tries to get emotionally close to her.

The Generation X pilot was broadcast at the same time that popular support for presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan was at its highpoint.

It was just an accident of timing, that the grim vision of America portrayed in Generation X could easily be compared to the future vision of a political candidate who has been criticized for supporting policies considered ultra-conservative and maybe even oppressive for minorities and women.

It is a coincidence that hasn't escaped Lee.

"What we were trying to do is project how things might be if this kind of bigotry and hatred and oppression continued to grow," Lee said of the police-state atmosphere in Generation X.

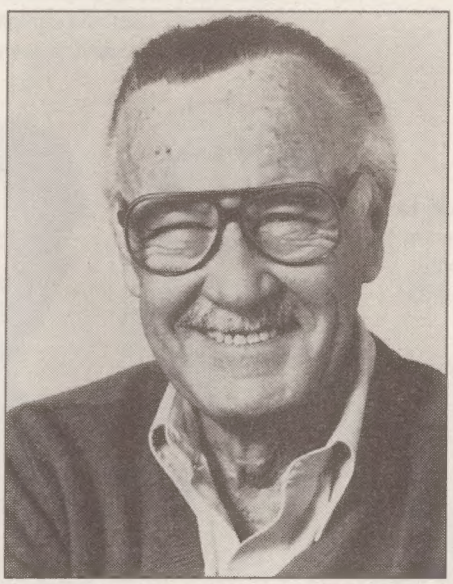

Photo courtesy of New World Entertainment

While waiting for word on the fate of Generation X as a regular series, Stan Lee is busy on his next project, I, Werewolf.

"It's purely coincidental this business with Buchanan. But I think oppression is something we all have to worry about in all countries, not just in America."

Lee explained that he's tried to promote the ideas of mutual understanding and co-operation for mutual benefit in all his works — especially in the original X-Men series.

"If we could only stop thinking of ourselves as the Good Guys and everyone else who's different, in any way, as the Bad Guys, this would be a better world."

Lee grew up in New York City's melting pot of the 1930s. He pointed out that he was lucky to have friends from a variety of ethnic persuasions and to have avoided experiencing any incidents of discrimination first-hand. He hopes that Generation X can serve as an example for young viewers who might experience pressure from family, friends and society to adopt prejudicial attitudes.

"Not only Generation X, but I'd like to believe that everything in the past that I've written or worked on would have a salutary effect," Lee explains. "Writers have both a great responsibility and a great opportunity to do good, to give positive messages to their readers.

"If they don't utilize those opportunities then they're doing their readers and themselves a disservice."

Something to howl about

Lee is also hopeful for another project being produced in the Vancouver area — I, Werewolf.

"This isn't really a Marvel project." Lee said of I, Werewolf. "This is what I'm doing on my own."

Lee added that a comic book adaptation could be in the cards if the series takes off.

Lee and Scott Shepherd developed their idea through New World Entertainment, and pitched it to the CBS Network.

The series' premise is that Joe Burstin, a chemist employed by a make-up company, is with his pet wolf in the lab when a storm breaks. A freak lightning bolt hits the lab and some unknown effect of the electromagnetic field exchanges parts of the basic personalities of the wolf and human.

The result is that the wolf becomes more docile, almost dog-like, when in the presence of Burstin. But it exhibits its natural feral side when others get too close. When dusk comes, Burstin transforms into a bigger, stronger and more hirsute — but still normal-looking man — who also has a more-aggressive and self-confident personality.

During moments of extreme rage, Burstin can undergo a further

transformation complete with fangs and claws and reactions based on a wolf's survival instincts. But he still looks like a human being and not like a Larry Talbot-type wolfman.

"When this guy changes into the 'wolf,' he becomes this macho charming guy," explains project publicist Kim Douglas. "He's not monster-like."

While the pseudo-scientific origin harkens back to the plots of old movie serials, Lee hopes that viewers will react as favourably to Burstin and his werewolf personna as they did to another of his creations that made it to the small screen.

"In much the same way, we took a monster, the Hulk, and made him the hero of the series."

Lee expects that part of the appeal of I, Werewolf will lay in its exploration of the Jeckyl-Hyde relationship between Burstin and his alter ego. The mild-mannered chemist can recall what his other self has done and is repelled by the aggressive nature of the wolfman and by the even more brutal nature of the "beserker" personna. Lee added that the series will not deal with the traditional mystical/magical side of lycanthropy.

In the pilot, Burstin is an accidental witness to a murder. The wolfman tries to bring the perpetrators to justice in his own way. If the series is given a green light, it would see the wolfman become a street vigilante. But there will also be room for some lighter moments.

"When Burstin is a wolf, he's witty and some of his comments are off the cuff," Douglas notes.

Raiders From Space

Earlier this spring, Cannell Productions began shooting a project based on an idea from X-Files contributor Charles Grant Craig.

THEM is in the aliens-among-us tradition and concerns members of a race which has infiltrated humanity in order to kidnap and smuggle humans off the planet for experimental purposes.

Simon Trent (Scott Patterson), a scientist specializing in cloud physics, stumbles upon evidence of the alien transportation system while he is observing a storm front. He takes on the mission of warning Earth of the hidden danger.

Craig wrote the script for the two-hour pilot.

The premise is similar to Quinn Martin's series, The Invaders. One unique feature of THEM is that while the aliens

Photo courtesy of Cannell Production Services

A veteran of such horror films as Zombie High and Waxworks, Clare Carey now takes on extra-terrestrials in THEM.

can assume human form, their exteriors become transparent in the presence of high concentrations of oxygen, thus betraying their extra-terrestrial origins.

Patterson's background includes an appearance on Alien Nation, while Tony Todd (who plays Berlin, the alien leader) is well-known for his role of Kurn on Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. Clare Carey, who plays Kelly Black, previously had roles in Waxworks and Zombie High.

They're Back

Trilogy Entertainment Group saw its latest foray into science fiction/fantasy hit the airways in April.

Bridge Studios in Burnaby provided the focal point for PMP Productions Inc.'s

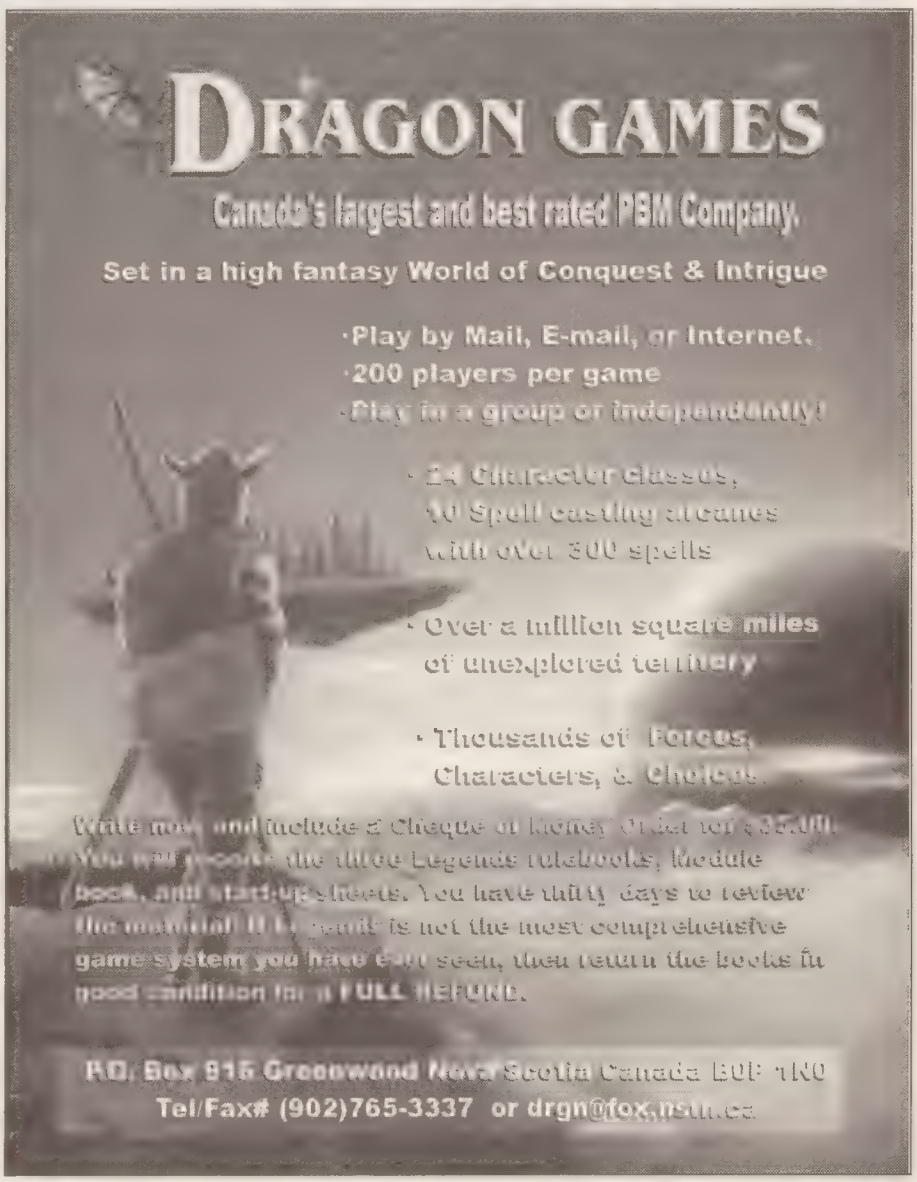
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Photo by Doug Curran/ SHOWTIME

In the series premiere of Poltergeist: The Legacy, left to right, Alexandra Purvis, Helen Shaver and Derek de Lint battle a demon during a paranormal investigation. The show is the product of the same minds that brought Outer Limits back for the '90s.

work on Poltergeist: The Legacy. While the name seems hauntingly familiar, studio publicist Dixie Cutler says the only similarity between the television project and the movie series is the name.

"The show doesn't owe a whole lot to Poltergeist the movie, except being involved in the supernatural. The concept is of a society that goes back to 500 A.D."

Trilogy Entertainment Group is owned by Richard Lewis, Pen Densham and John Watson, the people responsible for bringing The Outer Limits back to television. Their latest project is scheduled to air on the U.S. cable network Showtime, although independent syndication may be possible in the future.

The Legacy is a secret global society which has existed since the sixth century A.D. Its membership is small and select — its honour roll of luminaries is rumoured to have included horror writers Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson and H.P. Lovecraft. Though small in number, the Legacy's fellowship has immense and varied resources, both financial and otherwise, which it uses to investigate and combat supernatural entities and manifestations.

From its location on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay area (the old Royal Rhodes Military School on Vancouver Island serves as the exterior for the group's headquarters), the Legacy sends investigators on missions around the world.

For the pilot, the cast included Helen Shaver as Dr. Rachel Corrigan —who was in danger of being the unwilling birth mother to a new incarnation of evil; Dutch actor Derek de Lint as Legacy's head, Derek Rayne; Robbi Chong as Legacy researcher Alexandra Moreau; Martin Cummins as Nick Boyle, an adventurer more inclined to a physical style of attack against the supernatural; Jordan Bayne as Julia Walker; and Patrick Fitzgerald as Father Philip Connolly, an ordained and active Roman Catholic priest who is an expert in church history pertaining to the secular, spiritual and supernatural.

Most of the filming for the series was done in and around Vancouver's waterfront district, allowing the production to take advantage of the area's eerie atmosphere. While the pilot involved an attempt at reincarnation by an evil entity, don't expect to see the Legacy forced to save the world week after week.

"By no means are we dealing with manifest evil," Cutler explains. "some of the other 20 or so planned episodes deal with more mundane matters like lost souls or ancient curses." ☆

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Sci•fi projects keep Vancouver shop busy

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

The computer wizards at Northwest Imaging and Special Effects and FX in Vancouver had to really *stretch* themselves when called on for the job of making Generation X's mutant heroes look as super on television as they do in their comic book.

Eric Alba, visual effects supervisor for the Generation X pilot, noted that much of the more than 400 hours of three-dimensional animation that NWI spent on the movie was on the super-stretching ability of Angelo "Skin" Espinosa.

"We had to create realistic-looking arms that stretched in a believable manner," Alba said. "The key to that and other Generation X effects, lay in some of the oldest traditions of cartoon and comic book art.

While everybody knows that the human body cannot stretch like a rubber band, everybody is also used to seeing people make like elastic in the old Warner Bros. and Tex Avery cartoons.

"These are the only frames of reference we have for stretchable limbs," Alba said, adding that Northwest artists improved on those cartoon effects using the latest in computer digital animation.

"We built a human arm in 3-D with all the bones and muscles and tendons. Because the 3-D computer has no pain threshold, we then told it to stretch the arm in the 3-D environment and see what comes out."

Those portions of the simulation which worked well were saved and the rest reworked until they were also convincing enough to make people believe that a man could stretch. When "Skin" was supposed to do his stuff on the screen, computer editing overlaid the 3-D simulated arms over Rodriguez's own arms during the scenes showcasing his mutant ability.

Alba already had some ideas in mind when it was Jeremy Ratchford's time to howl as Banshee.

"I'm actually a pretty avid comics reader," Alba explained.

In comic books, when a power or weapon is used which involves sound, artists would draw a series of concentric rings radiating outward to represent the sonic effect. Alba and his people asked themselves how such an effect would look like in real life.

"We said that we wanted this to look like the back of a jet turbine, with all the properties of distortion and rippling associated with it."

The actual live scenes had Ratchford posed as if he were shouting. These scenes were then processed through a computer-imaging system, nicknamed 'The Charisma,' which generated the rippling distortion and shaking effects which matched the desired visual image of Banshee's wail.

> . . . Ratchford posed as if he were shouting. These scenes were then processed through a computer-imaging system, nicknamed 'The Charisma,'. . .

Particle animation was used for the scenes in which Heather McComb's character, Jubilee, fired off her pyrotechnic powers and for the falling scene when the Generation X villain, Russell Tresh (Matt Frewer), made his former corporate friend and ally believe that he was plunging to his death from an office tower.

Particle animation tries to recreate natural phenomena," Alba said,

The technique is often used to simulate fires, tornadoes, mist, fog and various other natural phenomena.

For the falling scene, a computer-generated 'stuntman' walked through a simulated window of an office tower and then, accompanied by shards of particle-animated glass, plunged down the face of the computer-generated building.

Generation X is only one of the many science fiction/fantasy projects that the Vancouver-based company has been involved with since it was formed 10 years ago.

The company is a division of Delta Cable, a firm that provides cable television service to residents in Delta, a region in British Columbia's Lower Mainland.

"We pretty much have every available piece of hardware," says Alba, "for a total digital effects facility."

Northwest's first sf-related project was to provide the special effects for the Nightmare Cafe anthology series. The series took Nightmare on Elm Street's villain Freddy Kruger off of the big screen and made him a television horror show host.

Since then the company has brought its special effects magic to episodes of the X-Files, the Outer Limits, American Gothic, Strange Luck and Poltergeist: The Legacy, as well as to such movie projects as Sabrina the Teenaged Witch, the Adventures of Captain Zoom in Outer Space and the BBC/Universal production of Doctor Who.

The company is in competition to provide the special effects for Chris Carter's yet-to-be-named project. Northwest is also working on a pilot for a proposed series about a world dealing with a deadly plague outbreak. ☆

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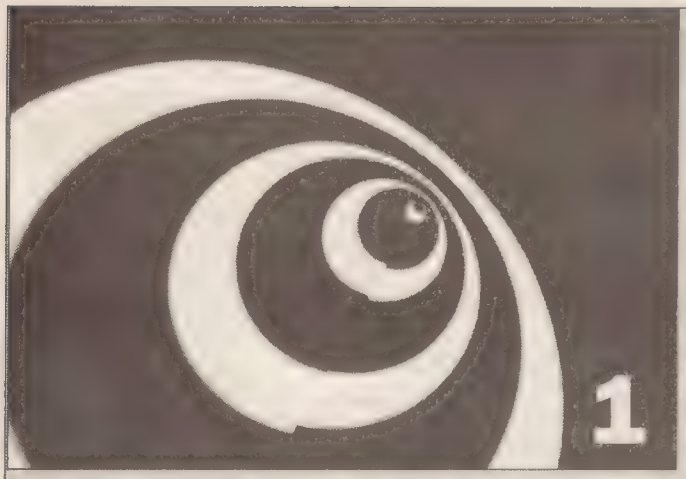
How to make a man (or mutant) scream



Artwork courtesy of Northwest Imaging

Want to impress your friends with a sonic scream all your own? No problem. All you need is a fully-equipped special effects shop. Here is the process that Northwest Imaging & FX used to make Banshee wail.

In photo 1, the special effects team created a conical shape to produce the scream; then in photo 2, they added nitro fog to produce a movement effect from his mouth; photo 3 is a clean picture of actor Jeremy Ratchford; in photo 4, all three elements are brought together to show Ratchford in the midst of his scream; in photo 5, Ratchford stops the scream.

Tormé sliding down new paths

Tracy Tormé is a happy man.

His creation Sliders, of which he is executive producer, returned for its second year in March.

The show debuted last year along with VR5 and Deadly Games as part of Fox-TV's latest science fiction salvos in the battle for viewers' attention.

VR5 fell short of the target and was judged too esoteric (even though virtual reality has been a common plot device during recent years). Deadly Games is still firing away, perhaps because its cybernetic villain confines his mayhem to the real world where non-sci•fi fans find it easy to accept the idea of anything involving computer systems turning mean.

Sliders remains a unique show. There are no signs of any imitators of its basic premise — a parallel world theory. The idea is that world history could have taken different paths. The latest print example is Harry Turtledove's Worldwar series which asks and answers the question: What might have happened if aliens had invaded Earth soon after the start of World War II?

But Sliders is the only television series that uses the concept of alternative Earths as its foundation. It was a concept that garnered enough of a positive response from viewers, that Fox executives decided to bring the series back for a second go.

"The main reason was that we had developed an extremely loyal fan base immediately," Tormé said.

There hasn't been any changes in the core lineup of Quinn Mallory (Jerry O'Connell), Prof. Maximilian Arturo (John Rhy-Davies), Wade Wells (Sabrina Lloyd) and Rembrandt 'Crying Man' Brown (Cleavant Derricks) during the series second season.

But the new episodes have allowed further development in the individual characters.

"Any series needs to change and grow," Tormé said.

Its rapid popularity has also made Sliders a very marketable item. Tormé and Acclaim/Valiant have introduced a comic-book version of the show. Berkeley plans to bring out a series of Sliders novels. The first book will be a novelization of the two-hour premiere by Brad Lindaweaver. It's due out later this year. A CD-Rom game is also in the planning stages.

Of course, Tormé is pleased with the success of his creation, especially since he gave great care to make sure that talk about alternate Earths wouldn't result in blank stares from viewers with only a passing familiarity of science fiction.

Photos courtesy of FOX Broadcasting and Tracy Tormé

One of the main reasons for Sliders' success, according to Tracy Tormé, right, is its ability to develop a loyal fan base quickly — something other sci•fi programs were unable to do.

"The biggest concern that I had was that the (parallel worlds) concept might seem confusing to some people," he confessed.

During the development of the first episode, Tormé made sure that the alternate worlds theory was clearly explained within the storylines and that the ground rules on how the four could interact with people on other Earths was laid out. The test audience had no problems with the concept. That left Tormé with the worry of trying to present a series "that would be a lot of fun" and contained the right mix of action/adventure and still managed to explore a unique science fiction concept. Tormé also wanted to leave room for the occasional allegory, black comedy and satire.

Of the first season's shows, Tormé said two, The Last Days and The King is Back, exemplified all of the qualities he wanted in the show.

The Last Days dealt with an Earth where nuclear weapons did not exist because the scientists involved with the Manhattan Project sabotaged their own work for fear of the consequences of an atomic bomb.

When the Sliders arrive, the world faces a threat from an asteroid collision. Brown winds up at an end-of-the-world party, Quinn and Wade face their feelings for one another, while Arturo must choose whether or not to correct the Manhattan

Continued on Page 17

Polly and the Doctor Who (Patrick Troughton) in the human colony on the planet Vulcan in The Power of the Daleks.

Time Passages

Fans keep memory of Polly, even if BBC didn't

By GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

Even after almost 30 years, being a Doctor Who companion remains a beautiful memory for Anneke Wills.

"I completely loved it, of course," Wills admits during an interview from her art gallery in Vancouver's Kitsilano District.

"Looking back, it was completely wonderful. We were with such beautiful people."

For fans of Doctor Who with long memories, and who were fortunate enough to watch the series when it first aired. Wills was the companion known as Polly. She travelled with the good doctor during the William Hartnell/Patrick Troughton eras of the original series.

"Some time with Bill Hartnell and most of the time with Pat Troughton," Wills character witnessed the first televised regeneration sequence when Hartnell's elderly portrayal of the Time Lord made way for Troughton's 'cosmic hobo' personna.

Wills was 25 when she first appeared as Polly. Now 54, she recalls that she tried to make Polly more realistic compared to some of the other female characters who were appearing on British television programs at the time.

"What I remember about my take on her at the time, is that there were a lot of macho heroines around. You had Honor Blackman, dressed in black leather, Diana Rigg . . . real toughies. My take on Polly was to bring her as close to my own experience as possible."

For Wills, this meant that during her early confrontations with alien menaces while touring with the doctor, Polly's natural reaction as a 1960s human was shock.

"For me, when we're looking at strange monsters or dead bodies, I'm really into it."

Wills remembers "working bloody hard" during her stint on the series as the BBC studio produced half-hour episodes every week.

Unfortunately, most of her appearances are part of the famous 'lost episodes' portion of the series when unthinking British Broadcasting Services executives in the 1970s approved the disposal of footage from many classic English black-and-white television shows to save on costs for the BBC archives.

Among the missing are many early Doctor Who episodes from the Hartnell/Troughton periods including ones which featured Wills.

"Yes, most of them are gone," Wills said. "What is left, is very little."

But she's learned from her guest appearances at conventions that Doctor Who fans are keeping the memory of Polly alive.

"It's quite amazing how this thing has followed me through my life."

Some fans have told Wills what she had to read when she auditioned for the part, who was there to listen to her read and even what her salary was when she was accepted for the role. She finds Doctor Who fans very endearing.

"There's an enormous Doctor Who family and it's very strong."

During the Vancouver filming of the television pilot for a new Doctor Who series earlier this year, Wills met and dined with several members of the project's cast and crew. She believes that Doctor Who's return to television is wonderful and hopes that she might be invited to guest star in some future episode of the new series.

"I'm really glad it's starting again," she said, looking back at her life with Doctor Who. "For some reason there is really strong magic about it.

"You were moving into a series where everybody was a legend."

❑❑❑

Fans who want to write to Anneke Wills can send their letters to Anneke Calen and Co. Gallery, 3305 W. 4th, Vancouver, British Columbia V6R 1N6.

Continued from Page 15

Project team's work and create a working nuclear bomb to destroy the asteroid.

"I think we did a good job of blending all the elements," Tormé said of the use of romance, comedy and the ramifications of atomic energy.

In The King is Back, Brown finds that he is the world's version of Elvis; gone but not forgotten thanks to supermarket tabloid reports.

"I started in comedy and it was fun to go back to that," Tormé said.

While Tormé enjoyed poking fun at the Elvis phenomena, the episode also examined the price of fame as Brown tried to fill the larger-than-life shoes of the world's Crying Man.

Tormé finds the parallel world theory a fascinating way to explore a variety of ideas and issues. Which begs the question if there are alternate Earths that he would prefer that the Sliders avoid?

"The true answer is the opposite of that," he said. "The answer is that there is almost no world that I would not like to see."

While the show has gained a strong viewership, Sliders has drawn some criticism for some of the alternate Earth ideas that have been explored.

"The only people who seem to complain fall into one of three categories," Tormé observed. "A, they're convinced we're radical left-wingers constantly taking shots at conservatives; B. they're convinced that we're extreme conservatives constantly taking shots at liberals and; C, people whose political correctness quotient gets bent out of shape."

Tormé admits being quite delighted with the responses in the last category.

"Political correctness is something I truly despise and I'm happy to take shots at it any chance I get. It's so inherently dishonest, yet we're all expected to follow its cautious 'don't ever offend anyone or anything' tenet.

"Although it's expedient to be politically correct across the board these days, I hope I'll always resist that temptation."

The parallel worlds concept has also provided the series' writers with an unenviable task of creating a new Earth every week.

"I think it's one of the strengths of the show, but it also makes it difficult to do production-wise," Tormé said.

— GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

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Trapped and dispirited, until it came time to face.

STOREY

Text
By DAVID SHTOGRYN
Art
By RONN SUTTON

The entrance to the hospital is deserted. Allan is sure Storey's still inside, but has no desire to find out. He wants a drink more than anything else.

He crosses the sidewalk that once held a massive lineup of people streaming into the building to see Storey. The quiet now seems strange. Stale, oppressive air is trapped in the tunnel formed by tightly packed, tall buildings on both sides of the street. At his feet, discarded candy wrappers and old newspapers clutter the pavement. A yellowed front page screams its headline "Storey Offers Eternal Life."

Allan can't see the photograph of Storey, but that doesn't matter, for the picture means nothing. Every person sees something different each time she or he looks at it.

Golden neon flashes "Peter's Tavern" from the top of a squat structure along a narrow side street. The electricity is still on in the city. Allan wonders how long this will continue. He steps around one of the countless abandoned cars haphazardly parked on the pavement and suddenly recoils from the stench of death pouring out its opened window. Glancing at the grey body sprawled across the vehicle's front seat, Allan shrugs off the repulsion. He's seen many of these, and expects to see more. Not everyone reached Storey safely. Allan turns away.

He strides over to Peter's Tavern, pushes open a heavy wooden door and enters. The blast of cool air feels comfortable on his face, though the peak heat of the day is still several hours away. He's tired even though he

Newcastle Brown Ale
Double Diamond
Budwiser.
Lone Star
ABSOLUTELY NO CREDIT
EXIT
ROWN SUTTON
96

rested well last night in a plush, vacant apartment a few blocks away. He rationalizes that he walks too much, unable to shake his fear of driving in the city, persistent even now. Under his breath, he curses fate for the thousandth time that he is here, trapped.

The interior of the tavern is gloomy and light coming in from the outside is filtered by the dark tint of the windows.

Circular wooden tables with matching polished chairs are set up to make it easy for patrons to move about. The atmosphere and decor would have made this a popular singles' bar. Now eerie silence hangs brooding throughout. The hair on Allan's neck tingle and he resists the urge to look over his shoulder.

He slowly makes his way to the long bar at the far end of the room. His fingers, instinctively looking for dust, slide along the black leather that frames the edge of the counter. There is none. Spotless drinking glasses set on a tray, wait in readiness for the crowds that no longer come. This place, obviously one of the last to be abandoned, is a distant cry from some of the buildings ravaged by vandals on the northern edge of the Seal, where broken windows, smashed glasses, liquor bottles and mirrors are silent testimony to the orgy of destruction.

He slips behind the bar through a swinging half door. Picking up a heavy glass, he looks for some Johnny Walker. There is one bottle, half empty. The ice and beer refrigerator is full. He fills his glass halfway with ice, then tops it up with the scotch.

He tilts the glass to his lips and glances upwards while swallowing the cool comfort. An elegant chandelier shimmering with tiny crystal drops, hangs overhead. The sparkling crystals reflect the shape of a slender woman a thousand times. Allan inhales half a mouthful of scotch and almost collapses in a coughing fit.

The woman is totally indifferent as she slides on a stool and rests her elbows on the counter.

Allan stops gasping and squints at her through the tears pouring from his eyes.

"Are you going to offer me a drink?" she asks.

He finds a cotton napkin and wipes the moisture from his face. Now he can see she's wearing a mauve cocktail dress that flatters her long red hair. Her shoulders are bare except for the two tiny strings of her gown. He senses a hint of light perfume, but for the time being the inhaled scotch destroys his ability to appreciate any delicate fragrance.

"Why should I serve you?" He frowns, surly with embarrassment.

"I'm the person who found Storey," she replies.

So, she's the one. He'd heard rumours of a woman who brought Storey to the hospital several months ago. The last report put her at Storey's side when It began calling people to Eternity. After that, all news ceased as anyone who went into the hospital didn't come out.

He'd heard rumours of a woman who'd brought Storey to the hospital several months ago. The last report put her at Storey's side when It began calling people to Eternity.

"Oh . . . " he responds, trying to act casual, uninterested. "If that's the case, what's your pleasure, lady?"

"Same as you."

He fixes her a scotch on ice and sets it on the bar in front of her, then tops up his own. "So you also gave It that stupid name?"

"No," she chuckles. "The newspapers did that. You know, the biggest story in history becomes Storey."

She takes her glass and holds it up to clink his. "Will you drink a toast with me?"

"I suppose." He lifts his glass.

"To us."

He hesitates, alert and wary.

"Storey," she whispers "chose you . . . to keep me company."

He taps her glass and drinks, playing for time. So far he's managed to avoid the call to Eternity. He has no wish to be caught now by an unexpected ruse from Storey.

"So you sold your soul, did you?" Allan comments.

The liquor is beginning to affect his mind and he thinks the statement is pretty funny. He does not guess how close he's come to the truth.

She doesn't laugh. Her glass is empty and she holds it out for a refill. He pours her a stiff one, almost emptying the bottle.

She swallows two large mouthfuls. "I was walking in the park," she says, "late at night by my apartment. I heard a violent crackle, like an arc of electricity, and the sky flashed white for a split second. The next day's newspapers described a freak lightning storm. They were wrong. It was Storey."

She slides off the bar stool.

"Let's sit where it's more comfortable."

Allan scans the shelf for another bottle of scotch, and settles for Dawson's Special. They walk to the rear section of the tavern which is made up like a giant living room, for the older crowd, he suspects, and they settle down in two deep chairs. He plunks the bottle on a side table.

"I found Storey," she continues, "sitting in the middle of a shattered craft of sorts."

A patronizing grin sneaks onto his face. Then a sharp pain stabs his right temple. She's staring at him. Suddenly she doesn't appear at all feminine. Her eyes are glazed and her upper lip is oddly curled. She looks like a cat.

"I don't think you should laugh at me," she hisses. "I'm the only reason you're still alive."

The pain in his head increases and he screams. Then the piercing agony stops. He struggles against a wave of weakness and gulps down a reinforcing drink, but doesn't feel any better. He shakes his head to clear his mind, and immediately she looks normal again.

"A few minutes ago, you were giving Storey all the credit, for choosing me," Allan's insistence on sarcasm brings on a repeat of the pain. "Okay," he gasps, unable to tolerate any more.

"You're slow to learn," she says.

He nods, fighting to recover, and thinks of the irony of her comment. No one ever accused him of being slow before. He was top in the university in mechanical engineering. The companies he worked for all paid him extremely well, but as soon as he could, he left the city, vowing never again to sit in one of its traffic jams. And he hadn't, for years. Then an old friend died, and he returned to the city to attend the funeral. That was when the Seal came down, trapping everyone inside. He soon heard that it encased the entire city. Along with countless others, he tried to escape. But the Seal's translucent, rubbery material was impenetrable to any force they could muster.

Radio contact with the outside continued for several days. They learned that the military had surrounded the city

and was making every effort to break through. No other Seals were reported to exist, and experts were arriving from around the world to advise and assist in the massive rescue effort.

Suddenly, inexplicably, all communications ceased and chaos spread throughout the city like a wild, virulent disease.

Storey began to calm the panic in everyone, except Allan. Panic was not part of his makeup. No alarm, no hysteria. So he was spared the desperate need Storey's visions of eternal happiness created in others. He didn't follow the path of the masses. Eventually, he began to accept that it would only be a matter of time until he, too, would be taken, but the days kept passing and all the other people slowly disappeared.

Now he studies the woman thoughtfully. She does not frighten him, though he found the pain she inflicted on him less than enjoyable. He proceeds with caution. "Am I supposed to be your slave?" He cracks a polite smile.

"Just company." She now looks vulnerable.

Her quick changes of mood confuse him. What is she, Storey, up to?

"Because," she boasts, "I saved Storey, brought It to the hospital, I'll not have to go to Eternity."

"I gather this Eternity isn't so wonderful."

She ignores his comment. "I want some company 'till the Seal lifts. That's you."

She begins to look like a cat again. Suddenly terror paints her face. "Storey!"

She stands up and clamps her hands over her ears. Her glass drops to the carpeted floor and bounces without breaking. Ice cubes scatter. She trembles, almost convulsing for a moment, then grabs his arm.

"We're to go," she whispers. "They're unhappy, Storey must also send us."

"They? Who are they?'

She looks away.

"It doesn't matter, I'm not going anyway," he calmly states. "Kill me now if that's what you have to do, but I'm staying here."

He stiffens to fight off the returning pain, clenching his teeth with the effort to withstand Storey, and her. Then the pressure in his head stops. He looks at the woman. In her fear she is shrunken and weak, less and less capable of doing harm. Allan wonders if Storey is trying to get into his mind, if the pain is caused by It, not by her. Perhaps, because Allan never reacted like the rest of the city's people, Storey is using different, stronger methods of control. Allan senses that now Storey, also, is afraid.

The woman retreats to a couch. She draws her knees up under her chin and wraps her arms around her legs. She looks like a cat again, though not a hunter this time, only a young kitten with wide, wary eyes.

Allan's glass of scotch is empty and he's starting to feel pretty good, The alcohol has added a full dose of confidence. He hazards a wild guess. "Storey was supposed to have left by now?"

She nods.

"Why's It still here?"

She stares at a spot just below his knees. Her eyes are glassy.

Realizing that another drink is the last thing he needs right now, he pours one any way. Food is beginning to seem like a good idea. He wonders what might be in the kitchen here, and chuckles about how nothing ever affects his appetite.

"Storey can't leave until everything's finished," she says. "I can't go back to It unless you come as well. I can't go to Eternity without you."

The truth at last! Allan is destined to go the way of all the others. But something is terribly wrong for Storey, and Allan is the Key.

"Where's Eternity?" he asks.

"Storey," she sighs in a soft feminine way, "came here from Eternity, It's home

world. There was trouble with his space ship. Storey was hurt."

Allan takes another large swallow of scotch while she hesitates.

"Sometimes . . . " she says vaguely, "to live, Storey's people need us, our souls, our life force."

These words come out as if casually tossed in the air, in the hope they will be missed and no one will ask her to explain them. She starts to cry and rocks back and forth on the couch as if in a trance.

Allan knows that Storey is controlling her, and he's not sure how much to believe. The fact the population of the city has been harvested for something as intangible as their souls horrifies him. Allan's emotions turn to rage at the thought that Storey can do this to humans so easily. Now they, Storey's bosses, even want the last two souls left here, in the city. Why doesn't Storey open the Seal and expose Itself to the rest of the world? Lots of human souls there. Obviously It can't. Its powers have limits.

Allan's anger lends strength to his mind and body. He sets his drink down and casually waves good-bye to the woman who is still rocking on the couch. There must be a store nearby that used to sell guns. Allan devises a hazy plan to arm himself, fix this Storey and close the way to Eternity once and for all. He is angry that he didn't try to do something earlier. Now he feels like the Great Avenger, and briefly wonders if his mind is starting to snap. He trudges out of the bar and onto the street, expecting the pain to start in his head again, but it doesn't. The airless, stifling heat of the enclosed city hits his body, and his eyes squint against the diffuse brightness of the sun pouring through the Seal. He waits for his pupils to adjust to the light before beginning his search.

Several blocks away, he finds a sporting goods store. Confused by the automatic weapons, he chooses a double-barreled twelve-gauge shotgun. He fills his pockets with cartridges, then, after loading the gun, steps outside. Holding the firearm gives Allan a sense of power. He aims at the store's window and pulls the trigger. The sharp report echoes down the empty streets as the glass explodes. He fires again, blowing up an adjacent window, then removes the expended, smoking shells and reloads.

He's suddenly aware of his hunger and a hangover that's starting to creep slowly up the back of his skull. His surge of bravado is almost gone and, procrastinating, he enters a grocery store and passes the empty produce section. He takes a large bag of salted pretzels from the snack shelf.

The pain in his head starts again, changed now, feeling like a needle piercing his brain through the base of his skull.

The pain in his head starts again, changed now, feeling like a needle piercing his brain through the base of his skull. Maybe Storey is trying once more. Maybe It's beginning to succeed. Allan drops the bag of pretzels and tightly clenches the handle of the shotgun. He staggers outside to the middle of the street. He feels Storey's presence in his mind, taunting, encouraging him to come . . . to kill It. Allan drops the weapon. He senses a trap. He cannot, will not, do what It wants.

A scream echoes down the tunnel of tall buildings, and hovers over the narrow sidewalks and filthy streets. Allan recognizes the woman's voice, and she sounds in terrible pain. The scream comes again, muffled. The hospital is not that close, but Allan realizes that's where the sounds originate. Storey is using her now, in a different way, to force Allan's hand.

It pokes a tiny hole into Allan's mind and talks to him like a parent. " Come home now." It uses his mother's voice. "Come home to me, and spare this woman's pain."

"No!" Allan shouts. "You can't trick me."

"Your world is not here, it is with me, your true home. The woman also belongs in Eternity, where both of you were born."

"Stop torturing her then!" Allan yells.

More screams. Allan is unsure now, of himself and the truth. His desire to go to Storey returns, to kill It, but fear restrains him.

Allan thinks Storey wants him in the hospital. Otherwise, It can't kill him. This nonsense about being born in Eternity is a lie, a feeble ploy. He's different only because he can withstand Storey. Perhaps if he can do that, he can also reject It, repel It, destroy it. The answer is to go to Storey, but not physically,

With that idea, confidence and power swell in Allan's substance. This is the life force Storey's people need. Energy flows from his mind into the charged air. Suddenly Allan is the aggressor. He mentally approaches Storey's presence and batters It's defences. Then instantly, he finds himself inside Storey's mind. Storey cannot hide Its fear.

Allan feels he's the strong one now. He can withstand Storey. Easily. His jubilation gives him strength. A myriad of colors swirl as Storey turns and shrieks like a threatened mountain lion. Through Storey's eyes, Allan sees the woman. She is definitely a cat, brown, terrifying, and her snarl appears as a feral sneer showing off gleaming, deadly fangs. An inky vortex opens in the space behind her. She turns and springs into its darkness, into Eternity.

Storey's defeat is unmistakable as Allan begins to peel away from It, but It dives into the whirling maelstrom in a desperate effort to entrap him. Allan is fascinated, then appalled. He sees faint shadows and hears the countless, pain-wracked cries of thousands of people. Horrified, he tears his mind from Storey and finds himself back in his own body, weak with exhaustion and relief, lying face up on the silent roadway.

He sees the Seal, high above him, begin to tear, to disintegrate. The sun breaks through and paints Allan's body with gentle warmth. A slight breeze starts to rise, cooling the air. he sits up.

Allan realizes people will soon start re-entering the city from the outside. Perhaps, he should stand as a celebrity, the sole survivor. But no, the only choice is to hide, perhaps in the sewers, until the searches are abandoned. Then he can blend in with the curious and slip out to the country once more. No one will ever be able to discover what happened here and why. Eventually, the city will be populated again.

But Allan is sure others like him exist somewhere. He must find them, and prepare a defense. With his awakened mental powers, he will have little difficulty. And he knows Storey's race, with their insatiable need for humanity, will be back.☆

A free computer program still carries a steep price and pushes a man to the limit of his sanity

Invasion

Text
By RUDY KREMBERG

"We're offering a free half-hour trial," the pretty salesgirl behind the counter told him. "What've you got to lose?"

Jeffrey Curtis set aside the toner cartridge he had already paid for and shifted his gaze from her inquisitive eyes, down onto the computer diskette in her hands. The words on the reflective silver label stared back at him:

He thought of the manuscript that was waiting for him at home, the one he was supposed to appraise by tomorrow. For a crazy moment, he felt he was part of the

story.

"Sounds like cornball science fiction," he replied, distracted by the girl's penetrating gaze. It was the same kind of look he'd been getting from Tracy lately — when she took the time to look at him at all. He wondered what was behind it, wondered how she would answer the question he was steeling himself to ask.

"Oh, there's nothing fictitious about it," the salesgirl said. "It's as real as your thoughts and feelings. The amazing thing is, it'll tell you exactly what those thoughts and feelings are. Yours and other people's. Can you just imagine what an advantage that'll give you?"

He could imagine it, all right. The problem was believing it.

"How reliable is it?" he asked, watching her ringless fingers as she held up the diskette. His attention gravitated toward the graceful curves under her semi-transparent blouse. He toyed with the thought of asking her out, just to spite Tracy.

"It's reliable," the girl said decisively. "Of course, with any complex new software there's a chance some minor bugs haven't been ironed out. But in this case it's a long shot. What you're getting here's incredibly advanced."

She handed him the diskette, and he thought again of the manuscript he'd been reading. He remembered the other manuscripts he was supposed to pick up at the publisher's and appraise by the end of the week.

"Just think of how it could help you," the girl went on. "Your career, your love life, you name it."

She spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, as if Mindware had already told her he was losing sleep over Tracy . . . or that he was a freelance editor who really wanted to be a writer. At the same time he detected a hint of excitement in her face. Was he the cause of it, or was it just the anticipation of making a sale? He had an idea.

"I'll give it a try," he said before he could stop himself, "but under one condition."

Her flawless pale complexion became tinged with scarlet.

"What's that?"

"You let me take you out for dinner."

She hesitated, her eyes fixed on his chest. It was as if she were peering into his heart, sizing it up warily. But she was only looking at his Pisces tie clip, the one Tracy had given him for his twenty-fifth birthday. Gradually the wariness melted.

"Why don't you bring the diskette back at closing time on Saturday," she said at last, breaking into a warm smile. "Then maybe we can go somewhere."

He agreed to that, struggling to contain his eagerness. To appease his conscience he reminded himself of the dinners Tracy had called off, of the disappointment and the frustration she'd put him through. Meanwhile the girl had him sign a receipt for the diskette, then took down his name, credit-card number, address and phone number.

"Store policy," she said apologetically without losing her smile. He just basked in its warmth and smiled back.

Only after he'd left the store, still smiling, did he realize she hadn't told him her name. Or how much Mindware would cost once the free trial was over.

❑❑❑

He settled down in front of his IBM clone, the manuscript and the Mindware diskette at his side. He tried to get Tracy and the salesgirl out of his mind. It wasn't easy. Nor was he quite sure what to do about the manuscript.

"The Mind Invaders," it was titled, and as with most of the slush fiction he was paid to read, the writing was a copy editor's nightmare, the characterizations second-rate pulp at best. But the storyline amused him. It told of aliens preparing to take over Earth by bestowing on people the ability to sense each other's darkest, most incriminating thoughts. Given this knowledge, the aliens figured, man's belligerent nature would combine with opportunism and paranoia, sooner or later resulting in a nuclear war that would wipe out human civilization. And save the aliens — who were immune to the effects of radiation, naturally — a lot of trouble.

Jeff looked at the manuscript, then at the Mindware diskette. Could the one have been the inspiration for the other?

Too bad I didn't get inspired first, he thought. I could have done a better job. As it stood, "The Mind Invaders" was too melodramatic to be taken seriously and not funny or incisive enough to work as satire.

That wasn't to say, though, that a talented editor couldn't salvage it.

Never mind editing, a voice in his head whispered. Take the idea and run with it.

He turned to his computer, then eyed the phone. Better talk to Tracy and make plans first, he decided. Get at least that much resolved. Otherwise it would be impossible to concentrate.

He called her at work.

"I'm just getting ready for a meeting," she said immediately.

"I'll only be a minute," he said. "Then I have to run, too." He paused, hoping she would ask what he was doing. She didn't. "It seems like weeks since we've seen each other," he pressed on. "Why don't we get together tonight, maybe go to a nice place for dinner. I wanted to talk to you."

"About what?"

"I'd like it to be a surprise. A nice surprise."

"Sounds like serious business," she said. "I'm booked for tonight, though. I'm going —"

A voice in the background interrupted her. He waited restlessly as she spoke back to it.

"Jeff, can you call tomorrow and we'll make plans for later, maybe the weekend? I've got to run. That meeting . . . I'm sorry, it's just that you picked a bad time."

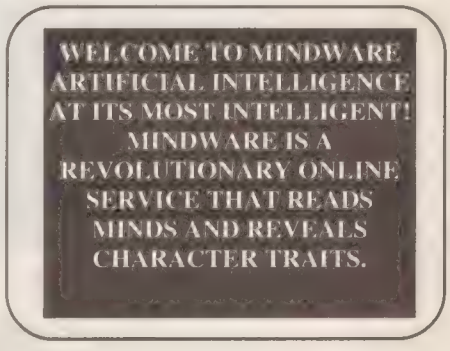
He wanted desperately to ask what she was up to tonight, but her abruptness held him back. It was like a door slammed in his face. He agreed to call tomorrow, telling her there was no rush, that he understood. And wishing he really did.

I'm booked for tonight . . .

He looked at the Mindware diskette. To hell with the manuscript, it would have to wait.

He switched on the ancient modem he'd bought from his friend Harold Wiley, a seasoned hacker who worked for a bank and joked about having raised money for a new modem by tapping into customers' dormant accounts. After slipping the diskette into the computer's drive bay, Jeff dialed the toll-free number that appeared on the monitor, then entered the temporary ID and password the instructions gave him.

Slowly, the screen filled with glowing text:



FOR SECURITY REASONS, THE DATA YOU RECEIVE FROM THE MINDWARE HOST COMPUTER WILL BE ENCRYPTED PRIOR TO TRANSMISSION. THE DECRYPTION SOFTWARE YOU ARE USING WILL AUTOMATICALLY CONVERT THE DATA BACK INTO READABLE FORM. THIS SOFTWARE IS PROPRIETARY AND MAY BE OBTAINED ONLY FROM AN AUTHORIZED MINDWARE DEALER. REPRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

Three menu buttons lined the bottom of the screen. They were labeled: "**PROFILE A SUBJECT,**" "**ASK QUESTIONS,**" "**EXIT**"

Jeff clicked his mouse on "**PROFILE A SUBJECT,**" then was prompted for the subject's full name, address and zodiac sign. Accompanying this last prompt were options to enter the subject's date, place and time of birth — "for the fastest, most reliable information."

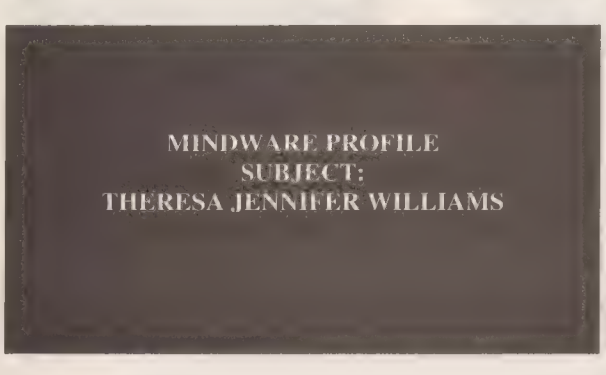
He frowned.

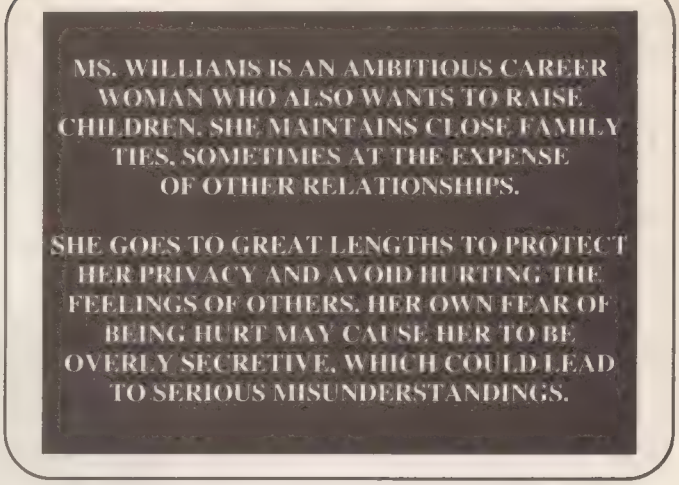
Was Mindware nothing more than a computerized horoscope service? He would have thought so, only the requests for the subject's full name and address seemed out of place.

Wasting no time, he keyed in Tracy's name and all the other information except "time of birth," which he didn't know.

Twenty, thirty seconds passed. He pictured his input coursing along miles of telephone cable, into the waiting maw of the host computer. He had no idea where that might be — there was no company address on the diskette label. He pictured the host computer searching its database for the profile that matched Tracy's birth data, maybe plugging into the Internet and collecting data from other computers. Government computers, police computers, medical computers. Expert systems that could do things he hadn't dreamed were possible. Or was Mindware advanced enough to calculate everything on its own?

He listened to the cogwheels of his imagination spinning, faster and faster. They didn't slow down until, after a good three or four minutes, the screen began to refill with text:




MS. WILLIAMS IS AN AMBITIOUS CAREER WOMAN WHO ALSO WANTS TO RAISE CHILDREN. SHE MAINTAINS CLOSE FAMILY TIES, SOMETIMES AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER RELATIONSHIPS.
SHE GOES TO GREAT LENGTHS TO PROTECT HER PRIVACY AND AVOID HURTING THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS. HER OWN FEAR OF BEING HURT MAY CAUSE HER TO BE OVERLY SECRETIVE, WHICH COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

He stared at the monitor in mute surprise. The surprise quickly turned into skepticism. He couldn't argue with anything in the profile, least of all the parts about Tracy being a career woman and protecting her privacy. The bit about children and family ties was truer than he would have liked it to be, too. But then, couldn't a horoscope book, the kind that supermarkets and drugstores sold, have told him as much?

What intrigued him was the line about her "fear of being hurt."

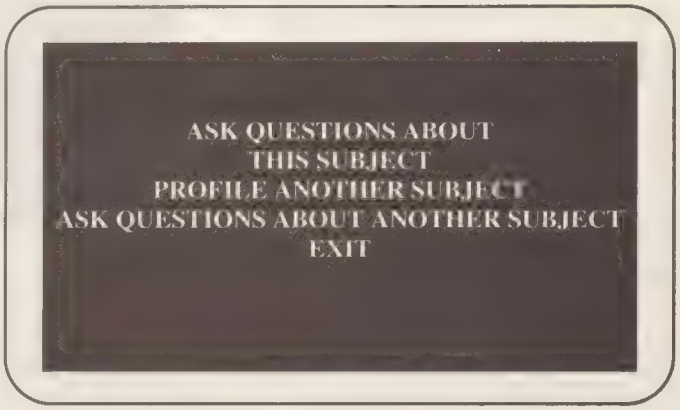
It reminded him of a story she'd told him. Once, after a few drinks too many, she'd made the mistake of confiding to a boyfriend that she'd spent an evening with an old flame — just having a friend to friend talk, she'd explained. Not only had the boyfriend not believed her, he'd gone into a jealous rage. She'd been lucky to escape being strangled, or so she'd claimed. She'd eventually ditched the boyfriend for the old flame. The cruel irony was that in the end the old flame had ditched her. The point being, although they'd parted as friends and still kept in touch, she'd been badly hurt. So badly that she'd stayed clear of intimate relationships for the next four years. Until Jeff had come along.

But what did that prove?

Even without knowing her past, couldn't Mindware safely have guessed she was afraid of being hurt?

Weren't most people?

The menu buttons along the bottom of the screen now read:



Jeff selected "**ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUBJECT.**" Up came a blank rectangle with space for three lines of text, along with a request to enter a question. And a

message saying Mindware was designed to answer "yes," "no," "probably," or "probably not."

He snickered. *This* was artificial intelligence "at its most intelligent?" He typed the question that had been burning in his mind for the past six weeks:

DOES SHE WANT TO MARRY ME?

More waiting. Just as it struck him Mindware might be confused about who "me " was, prompts for his name, address and birth information followed. He responded to all of them.

After another two minutes, the answer trickled onto the screen:

NO

He felt a prick of disappointment, a surge of anger. The feeling passed, hastened away by renewed skepticism. He clicked on the first menu button to ask another question and typed:

IS SHE PLANNING TO SPEND THIS EVENING WITH ANOTHER MAN?

The response took another eternity to come up, and when it did it gave him a jolt:

YES

He clicked on the same menu button, groped for the right words, couldn't seem to find them, and ended up typing:

IS SHE IN LOVE WITH THIS MAN?

Another long wait, almost twice as long as the one before, but there was no request for information about "this man." The answer made Jeff bite his lip:

PROBABLY

He swore under his breath. He'd met her ten months ago, when he'd been looking for a staff job with the government. She was the personnel officer who had screened his resume, and when she'd called to say there were no editorial vacancies but that she might be able to get him freelance work, he had asked her out for lunch. Since then his feelings for her had escalated from mild infatuation to a steady passion. And while her feelings for him had been somewhat more understated, they, too, had been steady, and she'd given him no reason to believe she was intimately involved with another man. That is, until about six weeks ago.

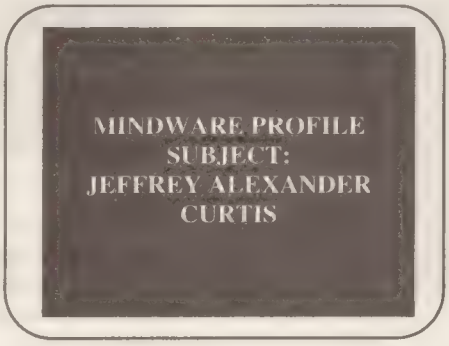
That was when he'd come round to the conclusion he wanted to marry her. And when she'd started "working overtime" and being "booked."

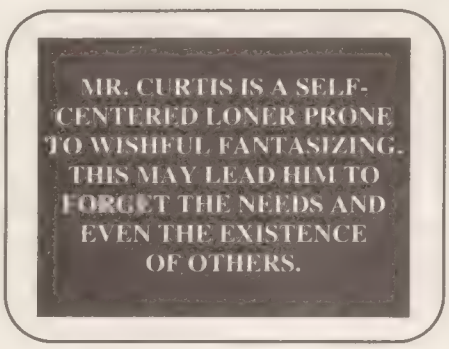
Either the idea of popping the question and getting the wrong answer is making me oversensitive, he'd gotten to thinking, or something's going on behind my back.

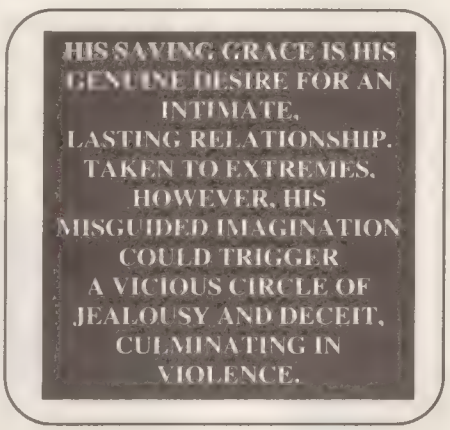
He grimaced at the word on the screen, not sure how far to trust Mindware. His own profile, that should tell him how accurate it was.

He clicked the mouse on "**PROFILE ANOTHER SUBJECT**," reentered his name and the answers to the other prompts.

Three more minutes ticked by. He began to read:







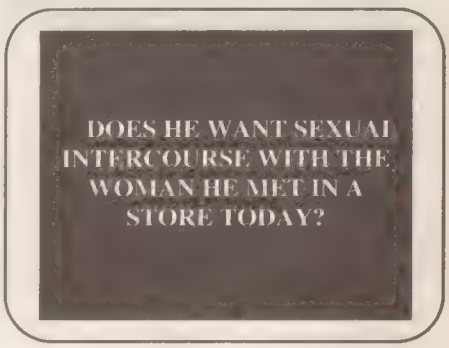
After a second reading, his initial surprise once again gave way to skepticism. He supposed that every now and then he did get a little wishful, perhaps a little self-centered and forgetful — didn't everyone and his dog? There was no arguing about his desire for an intimate relationship, either. But he hardly needed artificial intelligence to tell him that.

He grinned uneasily at the part about "jealousy and deceit, culminating in violence."

It was purely speculative, designed to whet his curiosity. Like Tracy's profile, the words could have been thrown together by a horoscope columnist. Now for a test question.

He thought of the salesgirl in the computer store. Too bad he knew so little about her, not even enough to make her the subject of a Mindware profile. He closed his eyes and visualized her slim, firm body.

How should he put it? Smiling, he clicked his mouse to ask a question, then typed:



He skipped the prompts for information about the girl, wondered belatedly if Mindware had enough to go on. The answer, when it finally came, made his smile widen:

YES

God knew how Mindware had figured that out. Had it used some Mickey Mouse probability formula, or was it more advanced than he'd reckoned? He clicked on the menu button to ask another question, thought of Tracy, of her being "an ambitious career woman who also wants to raise children," and typed:

Expecting another long delay, he sat back and looked at the neglected manuscript. Like the thought of editing

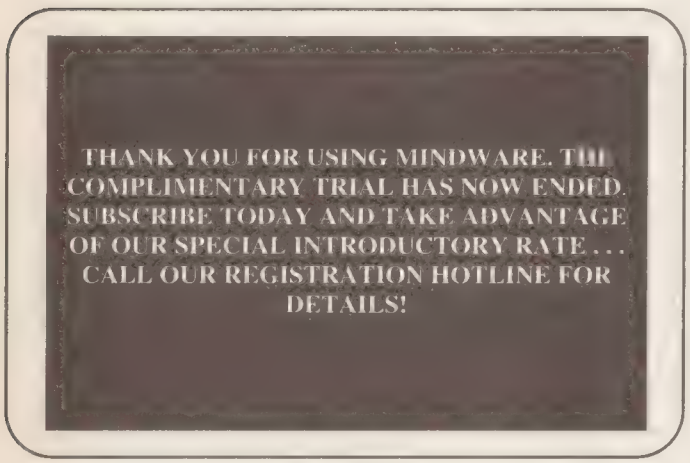
the thing, the notion of bringing up kids evoked mixed feelings. It wasn't that he didn't like kids or editing. It was the time and energy involved, the prospect of spending it all on someone else's needs and ambitions, of being forced to abandon his own while they remained unfulfilled, that put him off. It put him off more than he cared to admit to Tracy.

Sure enough, two-and-a-half minutes later the answer glowed on the screen:

NO

Interesting. Mindware was either very clever or very lucky. He contemplated the manuscript, and a host of other questions sprang to mind. Questions about the author, about where the inspiration for the story had come from, about the story's marketability. He was just about to select "ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT ANOTHER SUBJECT" when the screen went blank.

A moment later, a message came up:


THANK YOU FOR USING MINDWARE. THE COMPLIMENTARY TRIAL HAS NOW ENDED. SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY RATE . . . CALL OUR REGISTRATION HOTLINE FOR DETAILS!

He wondered if the introductory rate was "special" enough for him to afford. He suspected it wasn't. For good measure he started copying the decryption key onto a spare diskette. He would make one copy for himself, another for Harold Wiley.

As for what to tell the salesgirl, he would have to be careful, somehow invent a plausible excuse for not buying a subscription. No sense in spoiling their first date.

The copy program had barely begun when it was interrupted.

He looked at the screen and saw why:

ILLEGAL DUPLICATION — THIS SOFTWARE IS COPY PROTECTED

Not to worry. Harold would copy the decryption key with a program from his library of hacker software, then use the copy to gain free access to Mindware. If anyone could pull it off, Harold could.

Or was Mindware really smart enough to read minds — read them well enough to identify hackers and their friends, even before they tapped into the host computer, and report their intentions?

No, it couldn't be *that* smart. No computer program could, not in the real world.

On the other hand, in a fictitious world. . . .

Jeff turned to the manuscript and listened to the cogwheels of his imagination resume their spinning. Listened to the other thoughts that were crowding his head, clamoring for attention. *Take the idea and run with it*, was the one he kept hearing.

He put the manuscript in its return envelope, enclosing one of the form rejections slips the publisher had supplied him with.

Then he turned back to his computer and got to work.

❐❐❐

That night he dreamed he was in the store, making love to the salesgirl behind the checkout counter. He found himself wishing it was Tracy he was with, feeling deprived and angry. Next thing he knew, he was storming into her office. His computer had informed him she was cheating on him, he announced, and now he was going to punish her. She called him paranoid, said he'd been reading too much science fiction. Infuriated, he took off the tie he'd been wearing and tightened it around her neck. His computer never lied, he yelled at her. She struggled frantically, but he was far too strong for her. A feeling of omnipotence came over him, mixed with revulsion and horror. As her face turned purple and she went limp, he heard an air raid siren. Somewhere overhead there was a thunderous roar. Looking out a window at the sky, he saw an armada of ICBMs streaking toward the earth — the climactic missile attack in "The Mind Invaders" was happening for real, it dawned on him. He woke up in an icy sweat.

❐❐❐

By breakfast the dream was a harmless, incoherent blur.

He called Tracy later the same day, after picking up a fresh batch of manuscripts and meeting with the fiction editor. His outline for a "sci-fi thriller/satire" had been well-received, he told her excitedly, and he'd been asked for a sample chapter. That called for a celebration. Would she join him?

"I'd like to," she said, "but I have to work late tonight."

"How late?"

"Hard to say. We're changing over to a new record-keeping system. All the old records have to be updated and transferred. We've got a huge backlog to clear by tomorrow."

We. The word had an ominous ring to it. Jealousy welled up inside him.

"That's too bad," he said. "Why don't I call in a couple of hours? See how you're making out."

"Can't we leave it till Saturday? "

"Saturday. . . I might have work to do."

"Saturday *night*?"

"I don't know. Let's play it by ear." He waited for a response, a sign of disappointment, and got none. "Look, why don't I call at six? Then you can tell me how long you'll be."

"You can try that," she said without enthusiasm.

He said he would and hung up, wishing he could wipe her god-damn record-keeping system off the face of the earth. And feeling a perverse satisfaction in not making plans for Saturday. Did she even believe his excuse?

Maybe it's better if she doesn't, he told himself. Maybe what she needs is a taste of her own medicine.

Afterward he went to Harold Wiley's place. He brought along the Mindware diskette and watched Harold copy the contents. At six o'clock sharp he called Tracy. She said she wouldn't be able to see him that evening, she still had lots of work to do. He slammed the receiver down, took a copy of the decryption software plus a spare copy program for himself, then dropped into a neighborhood bar. He had a few beers but couldn't unwind, couldn't shake his anger or ignore the itch to find out what Tracy was hiding from him. After a while he stopped trying.

He decided to pay her a surprise visit.

❐❐❐

It was almost eight when he got to her building. He recognized the security guard in the lobby, asked if Tracy had gone for the day.

"Not since I've been here," the guard said above the din of

Were the answers to his questions in her office? Or were there only more questions to be found?

his portable radio. "And she usually says good night to me." He put down his paperback — Psychic Warfare — Jeff read on the cover and called her office. "Nobody there."

Jeff muttered a curse. "Mind if I go up? Maybe she just stepped away from the phone."

Without waiting for an answer, he stomped off and took an elevator to her floor. There was no one in sight, and the door to her office was closed. He knocked. No answer. He turned the knob, pushed the door open.

The place was a mess. Stacks of files and other papers littered her desk and the floor. Surrounded by the debris was her IBM terminal. An open drawer of her filing cabinet, the one in which she'd kept resumes, was empty.

He sidestepped his way to her desk. Her computer was turned on. He touched a key to deactivate the screen saver and found himself looking at a group of icons. Using her mouse, he selected the calendar icon for her scheduling program, then clicked on today's date. Several unfamiliar names had been entered between 9 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Job interviews, it looked like. Beside 5:00 p.m. were the words "start online transfer" and "deadline."

So she hadn't lied about converting to a new record-keeping system.

But where are you now? He heard himself asking. *And who were you with last night?*

He clicked the mouse on her schedule for the day before, found more interview notes. One of them was beside 11:30 a.m., about the time he'd called. He scrolled down to the end of the day. Next to 5:00 p.m. was the name Jim.

He winced. The name rang a bell. Hadn't she mentioned it not too long ago? He racked his memory, seemed to recall her saying something about the "close rapport" she had with someone called Jim, someone who'd moved out of town but was "still very close" to her.

That old flame of hers, the one she still kept in touch with, hadn't it been?

Yes, it all made sense: Tracy's coldness and evasiveness, the cancelled dates, the abrupt phone conversations. The rift that had grown between them ever since he'd started thinking seriously of marriage . . . as if she'd gauged his intentions all along and were trying to dissuade him.

Relax, you're hung up on being rejected and it's making you imagine things.

He picked up her phone and dialed into his answering machine. Just on the off-chance Tracy had left a message.

She hadn't. But the fiction editor and the salesgirl had.

Their messages were brief and to the point: his proposal for a novel had been turned down, Saturday's dinner was off. No explanations given. Just hasty apologies and insincere regrets. That was it.

Once the shock had worn off, hurt and humiliation set in, then indignant rage. He felt like severing all his relationships, personal and business alike, right then and there. No, more than that — he felt like declaring all-out war. On the salesgirl. On Tracy and Jim. On the editor. On all women and all editors, all friends and all enemies. That way it would be much easier to live with himself. That way he would be too busy hating to feel hurt or humiliated.

He thought of the salesgirl again, of the shapely curves under the semi-transparent blouse. Now he was able to do it without any guilt. Not that guilt would have made a difference. He hadn't been so foolish as to tell Tracy about her, or her about Tracy. Just as he had never divulged anything to the editor about lifting plots, or to the salesgirl about making illegal copies of decryption software. So whatever it was that had gone wrong, it couldn't have been because —

That was when he spotted the diskette with the reflective silver label.

He pulled it out from under a folder marked BIRTH RECORDS.

It looked identical to the Mindware diskette he'd used, except for one detail.

Printed on the label, below the Mindware logo, was the following information:

Decryption Key for Version 2.0
Subconscious Analyzer
FOR GOVERNMENT USE ONLY
Warning: Unauthorized Users Will Be Prosecuted

He fingered the diskette, torn between curiosity and an urge to rip the thing to pieces. Who else in the government had access to Mindware? The politicians? The tax collectors? What about the police and the military? If the software was advanced enough to analyze the subconscious, wouldn't it be kept under lock and key and used only at the highest levels, and under much tighter security? Or was "Subconscious Analyzer" just a fancy name for a slightly less crude version of the service available to consumers?

How many versions were there, anyway?

Copy it for Harold, he told himself. *Even if it's all bullshit, at least you'll know what it's been telling Tracy.*

Making a copy turned out to be no big deal. All he needed was a blank diskette. He got one from the supply room, where it wouldn't be missed, and ran Harold's copy program on Tracy's IBM. He stuffed the diskettes into his briefcase when he was finished, glanced impatiently at his watch, then took an elevator to the lobby. The security guard waved him over.

"She was here half a minute ago," the guard said. "Just came back from seeing her cousin off at the airport. She told me to tell you that."

Jeff froze.

"Her cousin?"

His anger evaporated. In his mind he was looking at a computer screen, and glowing at him was the question:

"Yeah, Jim. He came by yesterday and she introduced us. He was visiting from out of town," she said.

Jeff was speechless. Her cousin, for chrissakes. She had out-of-town relatives by the dozens, and she hadn't introduced him to any of them. Could he help it if he'd forgotten some of the names?

Relief swept over him, tempered by a vague unease, a nagging memory of a bad dream. He thought of something the salesgirl had said about the reliability of new software:

There's a chance some minor bugs

haven't been ironed out.

Had his question uncovered a bug — a major bug? Could it be that Mindware had misunderstood what he'd meant by "in love with?"

Or that it had assumed "this man" meant himself?

His relief turned into embarrassment, and from embarrassment into shame. So much for artificial intelligence. So much for relying on computers to know and understand the woman he wanted to marry. He shuffled back toward the elevators.

"She's not up there," the security guard said.

Jeff spun around.

"Where'd she go? "

The guard shrugged. "She left in a hurry.

"She just got here and then she took off?"

"That's the weird part. First she said she came to pick up some things and lock up her office. Soon as I told her you were there, she asked if you were upset. I said maybe you were, at least you seemed impatient. Then she wanted to know if you were wearing a tie. Don't ask me why."

A vision of her face, purple and gasping, flashed before Jeff. He tugged at the end of his necktie, remembered strangling her with it in last night's dream. His mouth went dry.

"You okay?" the security guard was asking.

But Jeff wasn't listening. He was debating whether to run after Tracy and have a long-overdue talk with her. Thinking he should, that it wasn't too late. But feeling too naked, too incriminated, to confront her.

I'd never do anything to hurt you, he wanted to tell her. I don't care what Mindware says about me or my dreams.

He lingered near the street exit, distracted by the wail of a siren and the start of a news bulletin on the security guard's radio.

He caught bits and pieces of the news, something about the U.S. and the Russians accusing each other of violating some nuclear arms treaty. Already the two countries were exchanging threats, warning of grave consequences. Suddenly, without wanting to, he imagined that he and Tracy were characters in "The Mind Invaders," that the breakdown of their relationship was only a small part of a global pattern. That Mindware had been designed by aliens to break down relationships everywhere — relationships between friends and lovers, husbands and wives, parents and children. Business relationships, political relationships, military relationships.

And that the aliens were biding their time, waiting for mankind to annihilate itself. To do the dirty work for them.

It's nothing but a stupid fantasy, he reassured himself. Talk to Tracy and straighten everything out. It's not too late.

He stepped outside. The siren was still wailing, and now there was also a distant rumbling in the night sky. Both the siren and the rumbling sounded familiar. Disturbingly familiar.

He remembered something else from last night's dream:

The air-raid siren, the thundering armada of incoming missiles.

Wake up, will you.

His head was spinning. He scanned the sky, saw only moonlit clouds and a few stars, then looked across the street. There was Tracy, wearing the colorful designer coat she reserved for special occasions. She was walking toward the subway station at the end of the block. He broke into a sprint.

He opened his mouth to call her name, but before he could utter a sound she disappeared into a restaurant. He slowed down, his legs growing heavy. The roar in the sky was so loud it was drowning out the siren. A tidal wave of panic crashed down on him. Any second now, his instincts screamed, there was going to be a barrage of cataclysmic explosions.

It can't be missiles, oh God please wake me up and tell me this isn't happening.

He looked back up at the sky.

The lights of an airliner emerged from a cloud and passed overhead. That was all.

A dazed grin spread across his face. What had gotten over him?

He felt the tension draining from his body. Mankind wasn't crazy enough to destroy itself, no matter what his dreams or the author of "The Mind Invaders" might have him believe. In light of this, his problems with Tracy seemed petty, almost comically exaggerated. Nothing that a good talk and some mutual trust couldn't solve.

His grin faded when he realized that the siren had stopped. That a police cruiser had rolled up to the curb ahead of him.

Two officers scrambled out and blocked his path. One of them grabbed his briefcase, opened it and whipped out a handful of diskettes.

"You're under arrest," the other officer said. He frisked Jeff, nodded to the officer who had snatched the diskettes. "Run a profile of the girl, too."

Jeff heard what the charge was and what his rights were, and at first he tried to convince himself he was dreaming again. It wasn't until a pair of handcuffs had snapped shut around his wrists that he noticed Harold Wiley in the back seat of the cruiser. He did as he was ordered and climbed in beside his friend. They gaped at each other in stunned silence, at the little computer terminal mounted next to the dashboard, then at the restaurant just up the street.

Tracy was sitting by one of the big picture windows, in full view of the car. She was with a man Jeff had never seen before, immersed in conversation. Was it a trick of the light, or were they holding hands across the table?

The cruiser began to pull away. Jeff kept watching her through the window, hoping to catch her eye, hoping for a sign of concern or at least recognition. But she and her companion seemed happily lost in a world of their own.

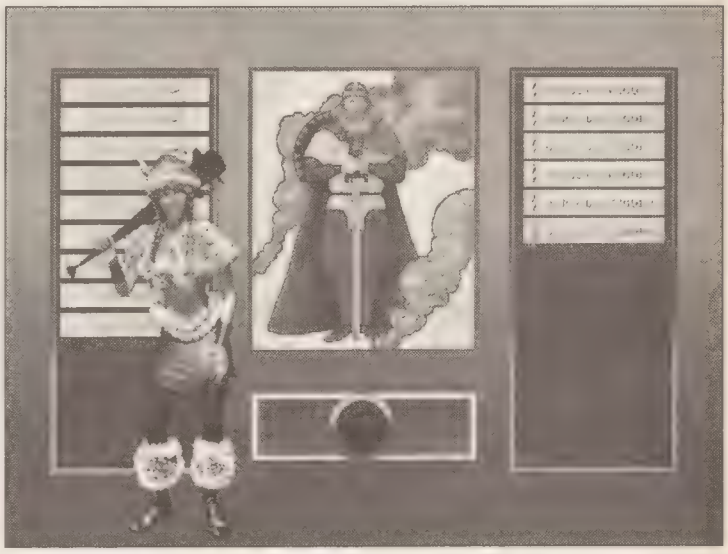
Somewhere in the night, another siren wailed.☆

Next issue:

Tales of the undead
(when zombies run amuck)

World awaits you in Civilization 2

By
GREG VAILLANCOURT



In the 1990's two games have dominated computer gaming. Those two games could be considered exact opposites. One would be good, the other evil. What are these two games? They are Civilization and Doom.

The former is a strategy game where you build an empire (civilization) to span the centuries by maintaining (as best as the situation allows) peaceful relations with other civilizations, while making life better for the people by researching advances and building wonders of the world.

The latter is an action game where you build an arsenal of weapons so as to stay alive by maintaining a killing spree on anything and everything that crosses your path while you search for a way out of purgatory.

Needless to say, there is a huge difference between the two games.

In my opinion, Doom has been nothing but harmful to the gaming industry, spawning sequel after sequel of gorefest games. It's enough to make some of us gamers who consider this stuff tasteless, want to hurl.

Well, thank goodness for Civilization. Civilization has been just as popular as Doom and has managed to maintain the balance between right and wrong, good and evil. Now the time has come when the rightful heir to the throne of Civilization has arrived.

Civilization II is here, and for those unprepared, grab onto something because if you don't, it will blow you away.

For those new to Civilization (what planet are you from?) all of the features will impress, from the Wonders of the World (including the race to space known as the Apollo Program) to the technological advances, to the intricate relations among the many civilizations.

The object of the game is to begin with a small band of settlers and venture forth in the world in 4000 BC to discover a suitable location to start your civilization. At the same time other settlers representing other civilizations will be starting out at other areas on the world. Each civilization (yours included) will strive toward one of two goals: be the last civilization standing or be the first to colonize the stars. As you develop your city and send out more settlers to build other cities and to eventually build an empire, you will meet with the other civilizations. It is up to you how to proceed; you can have peaceful relations, trading technological advances and maintaining mutually beneficial trade, or you can try and destroy them in order to pursue the goal of world domination. While you are out imitating Jacques and William (of the Labatt's Blue fame), your cities will be growing and soon through research, you will be able to build Wonders of the World. This will help your citizens and your overall score significantly. All the while, your civilization will grow and your people will be so pleased, that on occasion they will have celebrations in your honour. Eventually, if you make it, you will reach the year 2020 AD at which time your reign as leader of the people will be over

Doom has been nothing but harmful to the gaming industry, spawning sequel after sequel of gorefest games. It's enough to make some of us gamers who consider this stuff tasteless, want to hurl.

and you will receive a final grade as to how well you lead the masses.

Now, for those jaded gamers who are thinking they can pass on Civilization II because they played the original, think again. Among Civilization II's improvements are a map editor, many

more Wonders of the World (all of which are presented in full multimedia) and one of my personal favourites, an expanded diplomatic system. This new system allows for spies which can be sent to rival cities to steal technological advances, incite revolts, or even plant nuclear devices, among other possible duties.

So, as you quest to be the last civilization standing or the first to colonize the stars, look at your system's specifications and if your machine meets the requirements listed below, then bon voyage as you go forth to discover the world!

Civilization II runs on a minimum IBM PC 486 DX/33 but is recommended for those owning 486 DX2/66 or higher machines. Civilization II requires: Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 8MB RAM, SVGA Colour Graphics, 2X CD ROM / MSCDEX 2.2 or higher, Microsoft-compatible mouse and a sound card.

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Side Effects

White Wolf has announced the development of a science fiction role-playing game.

Scheduled to be released next year, the game will expand into other media such as novels, art books and CD Rom.

The game is being developed by Mark Rein*Hagen, the award-winning author of Vampire: The Masquerade.

❑❑❑

Mario, that plumber-cum-adventurer, is at it again.

The Princess has been kidnapped and Mario must rescue her. That is the plot of Super Mario: Legend of the Seven Stars.

The latest installment of the Mario saga features role-playing elements, including a quest and non-linear character movement. In addition, it includes the usual elements of a Mario game.

❑❑❑

In January, the "Insert Name Here" society received permission from the Robert Heinlein Estate and from the author's widow to use the title "Stranger in a Strange Land Society."

The society, founded by Simon Parkinson and Bobbi Wosowich, is an attempt to help newcomers enter the world of science fiction fandom.

The society accepts members from any walk of life. It does ask that new members be experienced in some aspect of fandom, be a convention veteran and be willing to help newcomers by answering questions. The society also provides newcomers with information and referrals regarding their areas of interest.

Society members will be at conventions to assist fans with their problems or their questions. In that way, according to Parkinson, members can enjoy fandom and not be discouraged by the sometimes overwhelming aspect of fandom.

There is no charge to join the society — it is a purely volunteer organization. Further information or memberships can be obtained by writing the society c/o Simon Parkinson, P.O. Box 737, Kingston, Nova Scotia, B0P 1R0.

Spider and Jeanne Robinson are currently brainstorming another book that will be an addition to an earlier series that Spider wrote by himself.

Robinsons: a marriage of creative minds

By
MICI GOLD

Spider and Jeanne Robinson, the husband and wife writing team who've produced Stardance, Starseed and Starmind, are so in tune with each other that they even finish each other's sentences.

You'd think they're telepathic, at least with each other.

"If I live long enough," Spider admits. "I'd like to end up telepathic with everybody. All let down the damn walls. We can all get over this quaint notion, we have inside our heads secrets so terrible that if anybody ever knew, oh, they'd run."

The Robinsons believe that their own long-lived relationship — "a sort of laboratory experiment in telepathy," as Spider describes it— could serve as an inspiration for other people.

"We've all had relationships just deteriorate and, if not in hellish ways, at least in painful ways," Jeanne says. "So we all know about that, God! Let's write about some of the stuff we've found out that's tougher to find out. It's not a very popular thing to write. Everybody wants to read doom and gloom."

Spider agrees.

"The writers that I feel like I owe my life to, are the ones who have brought me a few moments of cheer or a few moments of respite from the anguish."

The three books they've written together incorporate Jeanne's years of experience in modern dance and Spider's knowledge of science, to create both a new art form in space and a new future for humanity. The characters find ways of turning problems into opportunities, tragedy into transcendence.

In spite of their goals of telepathy and trying to balance the misery "out there," the Robinsons find that the secret to their success is to limit the time they spend together, at least on artistic projects. "It works, I think, because we're on different cycles," Jeanne admits.

"He generally never gets up before three p.m., and I'm up in the morning. So I have the house to myself."

She uses that time to do some of the writing on her own. About 10

p.m., they sit down at the word processor to work together until Jeanne falls over, then Spider continues until dawn. They also work in different ways.

"Jeannie gets to her muse by working hard. I get to my muse by trying to ignore it," Spider quips.

Their favourite part of any project is the brainstorming phase. "That's the most fun," Jeanne says. "You know, walks on the beach, sit by the fireplace, talk about these people, know everything about them right down to their great grandparents . . . We might not put it in the book, but we know them like we know each other."

Now that Starmind is out (the paperback version appeared in February), they are at the brainstorming phase of a new book in an older series. The two earlier books (Mindkiller and Timepressure) Spider wrote by himself, but this one, called Lifehouse, may become another collaboration. "I can use Jeannie's help on this one, 'cause it's going to have a couple of characters who have been married through at least a couple or three hundred years," Spider explains. "They're time travellers with a mission to accomplish and it's necessary that they stay together."

"The first time around, I was trying to end the series and I thought a nuclear weapon would do it, but it turned out to be an insufficient force. But I've come up with something this time so hellishly destructive, that it makes atom bombs look like firecrackers."

How do the Robinsons think a couple can sustain such a marriage?

"You find ways to be creative," Jeanne answers. "You automatically give that extra bit of energy to your child. You automatically give that extra bit of juice to your work. But you don't necessarily to your mate, and that's something that we prescribe for long-lived relationships."

The author of eighteen books on his own, Spider has another, Callahan's Legacy, due out this fall from Tor.

It's the fifth and last "bar series" book— he promises.

"The first time around, I was trying to end the series and I thought a nuclear weapon would do it, but it turned out to be an insufficient force," Spider says. "But I've come up with something this time so hellishly destructive, that it makes atom bombs look like firecrackers."

Meanwhile, it's back to their current project, which involves immortality.

"I want to live forever or die trying," Spider jokes, then adds, "and if I'm going to be around for the next thousand years, I want Jeanne with me, you know. I'm too old to go back to dating.

" It doesn't sound like fun."

Book Reviews

Psychic abilities at heart of Cosmic Voyage

Recently, there have been a number of news stories about the C.I.A. looking into psychic abilities during the height of the Cold War.

One of these projects concerned "remote viewing" — using the mind to gain control of information about distant people or places. To put it unconventional terms, suppose you had a vision of your Uncle Joe counting Mexican jumping beans at his kitchen table. Now, since you know that he has never been out of the country, let alone expressed an interest in such an odd subject, it would seem that your over-active imagination has been at work again.

However, if you later visited Uncle Joe and found that a friend had given him Mexican jumping beans as a gift, then you would know that you possessed psychic abilities and the data was 100 per cent accurate.

Government experiments met with mixed results, but there was enough to suggest an X-factor was at work.

Harvard professor John Mack has been criticized in academic circles for his contention that UFO abductions are real. It will be interesting to see what the same scholarly sources will make of Cosmic Voyage.

Courtney Brown is an associate professor of political science at Emory University and specializes in nonlinear mathematical modeling of social phenomena, environmental politics and elections. Brown has been using the remote viewing process to investigate UFO abductions, the nature of God, the 1947 Roswell UFO crash and the face on Mars. The results resemble some of the wildest science fiction.

A short history of the Unites States' involvement in psychic exploration is given. For example, astronaut Edgar D. Mitchell tried experiments in card guessing while enroute to the moon aboard Apollo 14 in 1971. In the early 1980s, psychic Ingo Swann, tried to zero in on distant co-ordinates and even other planets.

Each chapter concludes with a discussion of the results obtained in that particular session (which is helpful in clarifying points that may not be clear at first reading).

So what are the claims? And to paraphrase Johnny Carson — "How weird are they?"

Well, to begin with, at one time in the remote past when dinosaurs ruled the earth, Mars was inhabited by intelligent beings, some of whom still survive underground to this day.

In fact, the U.S. Observer may have been destroyed by these beings who wish to maintain their privacy.

The Martians were saved from extinction by the intervention of the Greys, who put them into cold storage and engineered genetic changes . The Greys, by the way, are not the bad guys they are portrayed as in our popular media. They came from a planet that was also in bad shape ecologically and bred emotions and sexuality out of themselves in order to survive. And now they want it back — hence the abductions.

In fact, there may be three types of Greys arriving on earth — from different time periods in their history. Time may be a crucial factor in the famous Roswell UFO crash.

It is suggested that there are two time-lines — one in which the contested events did occur and the other caused by the top

Pulp Heroes launched in T.O.

The Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Foundation/La Foundation Canadienne de la science-fiction et du fantastique and Jamie Fraser Books held a book launch to celebrate the publication of Don Hutchison's latest book, Pulp Heroes (Mosaic Press).

Albert S. Frank

Hutchison

Hutchison, the editor of the highly-touted Northern Frights series, is a leading expert in pulp publications and their characters.

More than 72 authors, booksellers, science fiction fans and entertainment figures took part in the Toronto launch earlier this spring.

Hutchison is a cinematographer and, besides Northern Frights, has edited It's Raining Corpses in China Town and The Super Feds; a Facsimile Selection of Dynamic G-Man Stories from the 1930's

Van Belkom finalist for Stoker award

Brampton, Ont., author Edo van Belkom has been selected as a finalist for the 1996 Bram Stoker Award.

Van Belkom, the sole Canadian finalist, was selected as a result of his novel Wyrm Wolf.

The novel, published by HarperCollins and reviewed in Parsec Vol. 1, No. 2, is a murder mystery set in a run-down section of San Francisco. In the book, a werewolf priest must find a renegade werewolf that is killing members of his flock.

Besides Wyrm Wolf, van Belkom has also written more than 100 science fiction, fantasy, horror and mystery stories since 1990. He has also written two other novels, Lord Soth and Mister Magick. His short story, Roadkill is scheduled to appear in the August/September issue of Parsec.

The Bram Stoker Award is presented by the Horror Writers Association for superior achievement in the genre. It was awarded June 8 in New York City.

secret Mogul ballon and each interfered with the other.

This, at any rate, was the opinion of the monitor and it is the hypothesis the author took issue with, arguing that it could not explain why so many people have clear memories of it.

So, what are we to make of all of this?

Although at times it does read like a commercial for the benefits Transcendental Meditation (in the closing chapters, when an advocacy for training potential diplomats for contact is voiced), nevertheless, there are aspects that square with what is currently known about UFOs and ETs.

In short, the verdict is mixed. Whether Brown falls into the category of Helene Smith — a French woman who professed to be able to describe the inhabitants of Mars while in a trance — only time will tell.

Fascinating reading — either science fact or science fiction – you be the judge.

— W. RITCHIE BENEDICT

❑❑❑

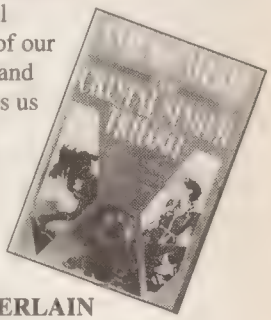
What price would you pay for a chance at living for decades, maybe centuries, past your normally allotted lifespan?

What would you be willing to give up for a chance at incredible riches? Would you trade your memories?

Anne McCaffrey published her first book in her Crystal Singer trilogy in the early 1980s. The last book followed 10 years afterwards. Ballantine has reissued the three novels as a single volume and at a price that's a real bonus for new sf readers who primarily know McCaffrey from her Dragons of Pern books. If you haven't read any of the Crystal singer books, then put this bargain on your shopping list.

The saga of Killashandra Ree of the Heptite Guild is a story worth reading all in one sitting. This is a woman whose drive does not allow here to accept being in second place to anyone. Though she will consider equal footing with the right partner who can sing crystal, the unique mineral makes possible communication between star systems and all other technological marvels common within the Federation of Sentient Planets.

The price of singing crystal, though, is the singer's memories, a bit at a time. In the end both Killashandra and the reader learn that, while forgetting the things that can hurt you in the past might seem a real blessing, it's all of our memories, good and bad, which makes us who we are and makes life worth living.



— GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

❑❑❑

Shadows of the Empire (Bantam Spectra) is another installment of the Star Wars saga.

This episode takes place between the second and third movies and fills in some of the continuity gaps quite nicely.

In the novel by Steve Perry, the group of heroes are plotting the rescue of Han Solo from the clutches of Bobba Fett. All the while Darth Vader and the Emperor are searching for Luke, while the head of a crime cartel has offered a steep reward for Skywalker's death — a move that he believes will endear him to the head of the Empire and discredit Vader at the same time.

In an effort to have the price removed from Luke's head, Leia is taken prisoner by the crimelord and must be saved from his stronghold on Coruscant by Lando, Chewie, Luke, the droids and a boisterous character named Dash Rendar.

The conclusion of this tale, defies description. But the work leading to the conclusion is an intricately-detailed tapestry that Perry manages to weave like a master.

To his credit, Perry captures the essence of Star Wars and its characters. He takes the reader from one end of the universe to the other with nary a second to catch his or her breath. Along the way, he explains where Luke's new lightsaber came from, how he honed his new Jedi skills, how the Rebels captured the plans for the new Deathstar and was 3-PO really surprised when he was offered to Jabba the Hutt in the third movie.

In short, this is a good book and one that Star Wars fans should make an effort to locate.

— CHRIS KREJLGAARD

Lupin bears imprint of the '70s

By
EMRU TOWSEND

Despite the best of intentions, I've never read any of Maurice LeBlanc's books featuring the gentlemen thief named Arsène Lupin.

But then, it's not required to enjoy any of the anime that bear Lupin's name.

In the 1960's, a manga (Japanese comic) artist known as Monkey Punch (pen name for Kato Kazuhiko) read or read of LeBlanc's gentleman thief, and was inspired.

Inspired not only to create Lupin III (presumably the original's grandson), superthief and master of disguises, but his companions: the sharpshooting Jigen; Goemon, the resolute samurai; Fujiko, the absurdly huge-breasted apple of Lupin's eye ("Fujiko" is apparently a pun on the term "twin peaks"); and Inspector Zenigata, the man obsessed with Lupin's capture.

Monkey Punch took these characters, mixed them up with sex, action and zany humour and came up with Lupin III, first serialized as a weekly manga in 1967.

The series was popular enough to have spawned an animated television series and several movies (less sex, though); in fact, Lupin III TV movies are still being made to this day.

Lupin III: The Mystery of Mamo (Streamline, 1995; originally Lupin vs. the Clones, 1978) was the first Lupin III production I'd ever seen (in French, as Les folles aventures de Lupin III), about ten years ago.

It's also the Lupin film I remembered the least. I wasn't concerned; Lupin hasn't let me down yet.

He didn't let me down this time, either. As can be expected, the movie starts with Lupin making one of his amazing escapes, possibly the most amazing of his career — he is caught and executed, only to reappear hale and hearty a few minutes later, hang-gliding away from a furious Zenigata. How does he beat the Reaper? We aren't given enough time to figure it out: soon we find him in Egypt, outsmarting Zenigata yet again as he steals a gem for Fujiko. (Lupin and Fujiko have an interesting relationship. Both are master thieves who often find themselves working together or against each other. The two care for each other, but Fujiko tends to be aloof while Lupin expresses his feelings by leering.)

As it happens, the gem is integral to a fiendish plot.

A mysterious figure known as Mamo seems to have discovered the secret of immortality, and (what else?) wants to take over the world. Failing that, he intends to destroy the world and take over what's left.

Fujiko and Lupin double-cross each other, which ends up involving Lupin, Goemon, and Jigen. Our heroes then discover the mad plot and try to do something about it.

Mystery of Mamo is one of those films that straddles the line between live-action and animated subject matter. Rooted less in Star Wars and more in James Bond (it seems as if Lupin's saved the world about as many times), the slightly fantastic — Lupin's daring escapes, for instance — comes across about as convincingly as Bond; the outrageously fantastic gain a little more credibility because of the unreal nature of animation.

The pacing, structure, locales, and styles of dress are much like a 1970's Bond movie, but the stylization of the artwork and some of the gags are wacky enough to remind you that this is a cartoon.

I have only one minor gripe with this film.

In the English translation, Streamline placed the film after the Cold War, and yet the visuals and music are obviously a product of the 1970's.

In fact, this is one of those films that manages to bear the imprint of the 1970's without being garish, tacky or dated.

However, this comes up so rarely that it shouldn't get in the way of enjoying this fun film.

❑ **Emru Towsend is editor of fps: The Magazine of Animation on Film and Video. He can be reached via either Parsec, emru@cam.org or at switch@bix.com. His column appears in every issue of Parsec.**

Who's Who

Rudy Kremberg is a Toronto-based writer whose work has appeared in Canadian, U.S. and British publications. He has also sold fiction to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and edited material ranging from novels to medical research papers. His latest fiction credits include short stories in the Northern Frights, Shivers and Wordscape anthology series (from Mosaic Press, Stoddart and the Canadian Authors Association, respectively). Earlier publications run the gamut from literary magazines such as Queen's Quarterly to On Spec, Knave (U.K.), Byline (U.S.) and other periodicals.

His nonfiction has appeared in various consumer magazines (e.g., Toronto Life, The World and I), business newsletters and trade journals.

Mici Gold has written interviews for Sol Rising, the newsletter of the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy, and for TransVersion. Her short stories have appeared in Wordscapes, the anthology of the Canadian Authors Association. Mici's short story, Time Travel in the Age of Aquarius appeared in the Oct./Nov. 1995 issue of Parsec. One of her poems is schueduled to appear in an upcoming issue of TransVersions. She lives in Toronto.

David Shotgryn lives in Scarborough (affectionately known as Scarberia), Ont, with his wife and a powder puff German Shepard called Rambo (honest). He has had more than twenty stories published in a wide variety of magazines and genres, science fiction, fantasy, horror and mainstream. Like everyone else in the world, he is currently working on a novel, or two or three.

Gregg Chamberlain is a freelance journalist, based in Revelstoke, B.C. He is a regular contributor to Parsec. In the coming issues, Parsec will publish Chamberlain's interviews with William Gibson, Sabrina Lloyd, Leslie Neilson and Cleavant Derricks.

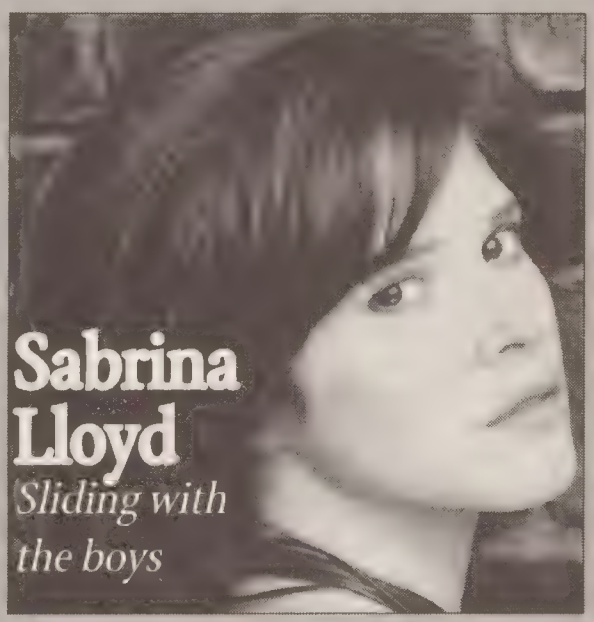
In the next issue of

PARSEC

Rene Auberjonois
On the many faces of Odo

William Gibson
Cyberpuk's grandfather

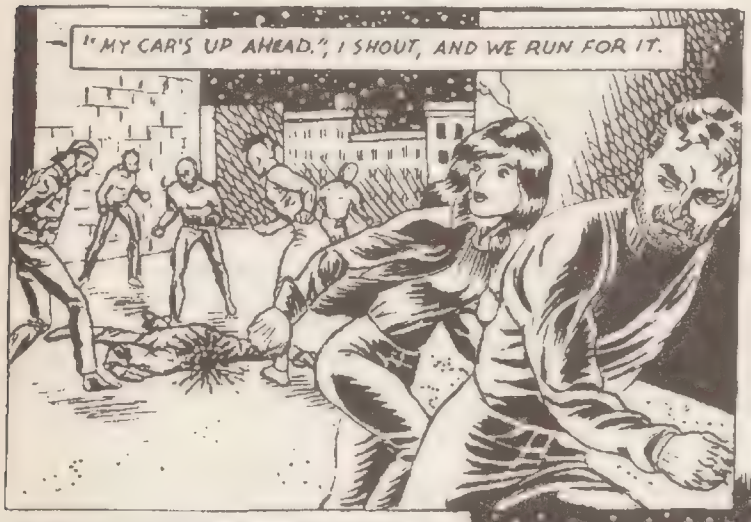
And much more as we mark our first anniversary

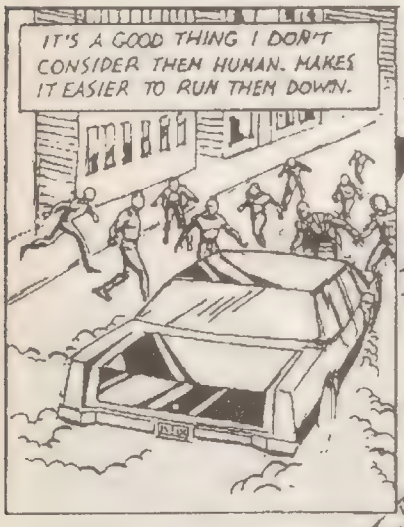


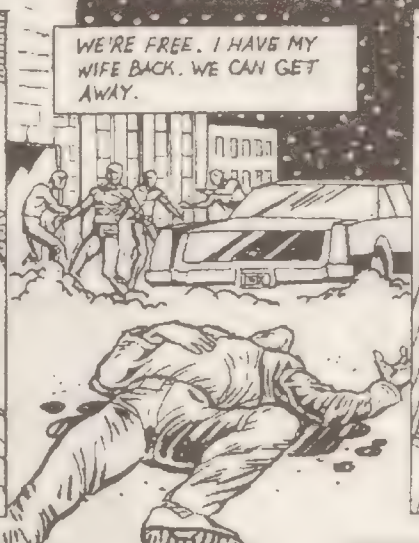
UNKNOWN FORCES

STORY: KENNEDY GORDON
PICTURES: JOHN TKACHUK

THE STORY: SAVED FROM CERTAIN DEATH BY HIS TELEPATHIC WIFE, DEL MAR MUST NOW ESCAPE FROM THE DOMINATOR STRONGHOLD OF REDCLOUD. BUT AFTER KILLING THE DOMINATOR LEADER, HE AND HIS WIFE AREN'T EXACTLY FREE TO FLEE...







I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER. SHE'S A TELEPATH, BUT THE DOMINATORS HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO MAKE HER ONE OF THEM. SHE'S HER OWN PERSON. AND WE'RE TOGETHER. I'D LIKE TO FORGET ALL THIS

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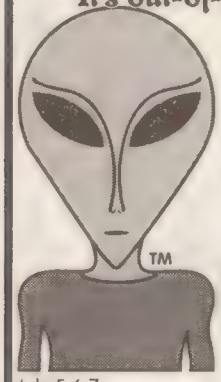

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Science Fiction Saturday: Holiday Inn, Brampton, Ontario. Panels, classic videos and English high tea. Information: 412-4 Lisa St. Brampton, Ont., L6T 4B6.

August 4-6

Toronto Trek 10: Regal Constellation Hotel, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guest: Robert Picardo. Information: Suite 0116, Box 187, 65 Front St., Toronto M5J 1E6; (416) 699-4666 http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~startrek/toronto_trek.html.

September 14

Falcon: Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax, N.S. Scheduled guests: Robert J. Sawyer, Peter Francis and Luisa Nadalini. Registration: $10 before Aug. 14, $12 at the door, $7 for children under 12. Information: P.O. Box 36123, Halifax, B3J 3S9; (902) 445-2281; Fax: (902) 422-7889; e-mail: gtucker@fox.nstn.ns.ca.

October 24-27

NorthStar 1: Harrison Hot Springs Resort, Richmond, B.C. Scheduled guests: S.M. Stirling and Graeme Cameron. For information http://www.computel.com/~mimick/Star. Tickets: (800) 665-5454 or (604) 280-2801.

November. 1-3

Primedia: Ramada 400/401, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guest: Chris Carter. Information: 68-2035 South Millway, Mississauga, Ont., L5L 1R7; (416) 820-3844.

August 14-17, 1997

Dracula 97: A Centennial Celebration: Los Angeles, Ca. Major scholars and writers have been invited to attend. Information: Elizabeth Miller, Box 23340, Churchill Square P.O., St. John's, Nfld., A1B 4J9 or emiller@plato.ucs.mum.caj

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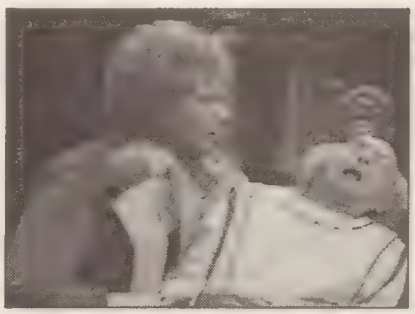
World Wide Web: www.io.org/~kcozens/ttrek

On this page it's not what you know, but Who you know



The Internet is filled with sites dedicated to the good Doctor — we found more than 11,000 in one search. We took the liberty of pulling some trivial gems (or is it trivia gems?) from some of the sites. Let's see how well versed you are in the land of Whoville.

1) How many episodes did William Hartnell portray the doctor?
a) 154; (b) 135; (c) 92; (d) 83

2) How many episodes did Tom Baker portray the doctor?
a) 181; (b) 150; (c) 87; (d) 123

3) What is the name of the only Doctor Who episode never to be broadcast?

4) What is the title of the first program that Doctor Who's companion, Polly appeared?

5) Who played the First Master?

6) Who played the Third master?

7) Which of these monsters do not belong?
a) Daleks; (b) Yeti; (c) Cyberman; (d) Saurians; (e) Sontarians

8) What is Captain Yates' first name?

9) What is the name of Doctor Who's companion in the very first episode?

10) Where did she enter the TARDIS?

11) What subject did she teach?

12) Including this springs movie, how many installments have there been?

13) How man actors have portrayed Doctor Who?

14) How many hearts does the doctor have? (OK we had to toss in an easy one).

15) What planet is the doctor from? (OK we tossed in another easy one).

16) How did Katrina die?

17) Who were the first two companions to witness Doctor Who's regeneration?

18) What is the full name of Colonel/Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart?

(19) What is K-9?

20) What does Ace usually carry around with her?

1) b; (2) a; (3) Shada; (4) The War Machines; (5) Roger Delgado; (6) Anthony Ainley; (7) d; (8) Mike; (9) Barbara Wright; (10) at the junkyard at 76 Totters Lane; (11) History; (12) 695; (13) eight; (14) two; (15) Gallifrey; (16) she opened the airlock out into space; (17) Polly and Ben; (18) Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart; (19) a robotic dog that doubled as a mobile computer/defense system; (20) Nitro-9

Next Issue

A new twist to the brain teaser

PRIX AURORA AWARDS 1996
Voting Ballot

To vote:

1. One must be a Canadian citizen, not necessarily living in Canada, or a permanent resident to vote.
2. One must be a member of Canvention. Attending membership is $35. Supporting membership is $10. Voting membership is $4.
3. All voting ballots must be mailed before June 30
4. Send completed ballot to: Prix Aurora Awards 1996, c/o Dennis Mullin, 69 Donald St., Unit 6, Kitchener, Ont, N2B 3G6.

Best Long-Form Work in English (1994-95)

___ The Cursed, Dave Duncan (Del Rey, 95)
___ The Lions of Al-Rassan, Guy Gavriel Kay (Viking, 95)
___ Starmind, Spider & Jeanne Robinson (Ace, 95; serialized in Analog Aug-Nov/94)
___ The Terminal Experiment, Robert J. Sawyer (HarperPrism, 95; serialized in Analog as Hobson's Choice)
___ Resurrection Man, Sean Stewart (Ace, 95)
___ Mystérium, Robert Charles Wilson (Bantam Spectra, 94)

Best Long-Form Work in French (1994-95)

___ Les Voyages thanatologiques de Yan Malter, Jean-Pierre April (Qu\'ebec/Am\'erique, 95)
___ L'Oiseau de feu (2-C), Jacques Brossard (Lem\'eac, 95)
___ La Rose du d\'esert, Yves Meynard (Le Passeur, 95) (nouvelles)
___ Lame, Esther Rochon (Qu\'ebec/Am\'erique, 95)
___ Manuscrit trouv\'e dans un secr\'etaire, Daniel Sernine (Pierre Tisseyre, 94)
___ Les Voyageurs malgr\'e eux, \'Elisabeth Vonarburg (Qu\'ebec/Am\'erique, 94)
___ Pas de prix

Best Short-Form Work in English

___ "The Dead Go Shopping", Stephanie Bedwell-Grime (Northern Frights 3)
___ "Tea and Hamsters", Michael Coney (F&SF Jan/95)
___ "The Summer Worms", David Nickle (Northern Frights 3)
___ "Lost in the Mail," Robert J. Sawyer (TransVersions #3)
___ "The Perseids," Robert Charles Wilson (Northern Frights 3)

Best Short-Form Work in French

___ "La Cit\'e de Penlocke", Natasha Beaulieu (imagine... 72)
___ "\'Equinoxe", Yves Meynard (La Rose du d\'esert, Le Passeur)
___ "Adieu aux armes pour une fourmi-soldat", Claude-Michel Pr\'evost (Solaris 112)
___ "L'Attrait du bleu", Esther Rochon (Solaris 113)
___ "Le peuple de Prot\'ee", Jean-Louis Trudel (Solaris 115)
___ Pas de prix

Best Other Work in English

___ Northern Frights 3, Don Hutchison, ed. (Mosaic Press) (anthology)
___ On Spec: The First Five Years, The On Spec Editorial Collective, ed. (Tesseract Books) (anthology)
___ ReBoot, animated TV series (BLT Productions)
___ Hugh Spencer & Allan Weiss, for the National Library exhibit: Out Of This World
___ TransVersions, sf magazine (Island Specialty Reports)

Best Other Work in French

___ "Casanegra", Denis Vaillancourt et Thierry Vincent (imagine... 71) (texte dramatique)
___ imagine..., Marc Lemaire, r\'ed. (Les Imagino des)
___ "Le mod\`ele de Pickman", Daniel Canty (Solaris 115)
___ Solaris, Jo\"el Champetier, r\'ed. (Les Compagnons \`a temps perdu)
___ Jean-Louis Trudel, critiques (Solaris 113, 114)
___ \'Elisabeth Vonarburg, critiques (Solaris 112-114), interventions (SRC-Radio "Demain la veille")
___ Pas de prix

Artistic Achievement

___ Steve Fahnestalk
___ Jean-Pierre Normand
___ Robert Pasternak
___ DL Sproule
___ Henry Van Der Linde

Fan Achievement (Fanzine)

___ BCSFAzine, R. Graeme Cameron / John C.H. Wong
___ From Beyond the O\"ort Cloud, Aaron Yorgason
___ Warp, Keith Braithwaite
___ Warp Factor, Chris Chartier
___ Under the Ozone Hole, Karl Johanson & John Herbert

Fan Achievement (Organizational)

___ Chris Chartier (Warp 9)
___ Judith Hayman (FilkOntario)
___ Lynda Pelley (MonSFFA)
___ Capucine Plourde (KIDC)
___ Rebecca Senese (Space Time Continuum)
___ Jean-Louis Trudel (SFSF Bor\'eal, Prix Bor\'eal)
___ Monica Winkler (Toronto Trek)

Fan Achievement (Other)

___ Stephanie Bedwell-Grime (filk-singing)
___ Adam Charlesworth (Ether Patrol reviews)
___ Lou Israel (entertainer)
___ Lloyd Penney (fan-writing)
___ Larry Stewart (entertainer)

Leaving our first year . . .

In our first year, Parsec has brought you interviews with the likes of

Robert Joy
Garrett Wang
Terry Pallot
Clifford Stoll
Roxann Biggs-Dawson
Tracy Tormé
Edo van Belkom
Geraint Wyn Davies
John Colicos
Ken Lashley
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Gabriel Morrissette
Terry Pratchett
William Shatner
Grace Lee Whitney
Majel Barrett Roddenberry
Chris Carter
Berni Wrightson

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. . . Entering our second year

Next issue marks the start of Parsec's second year, a year that will see the likes of

Malcolm McDowell
William Gibson
Gwenyth Walsh
David Shotgryn
Rene Auberjonois
Robert Sawyer
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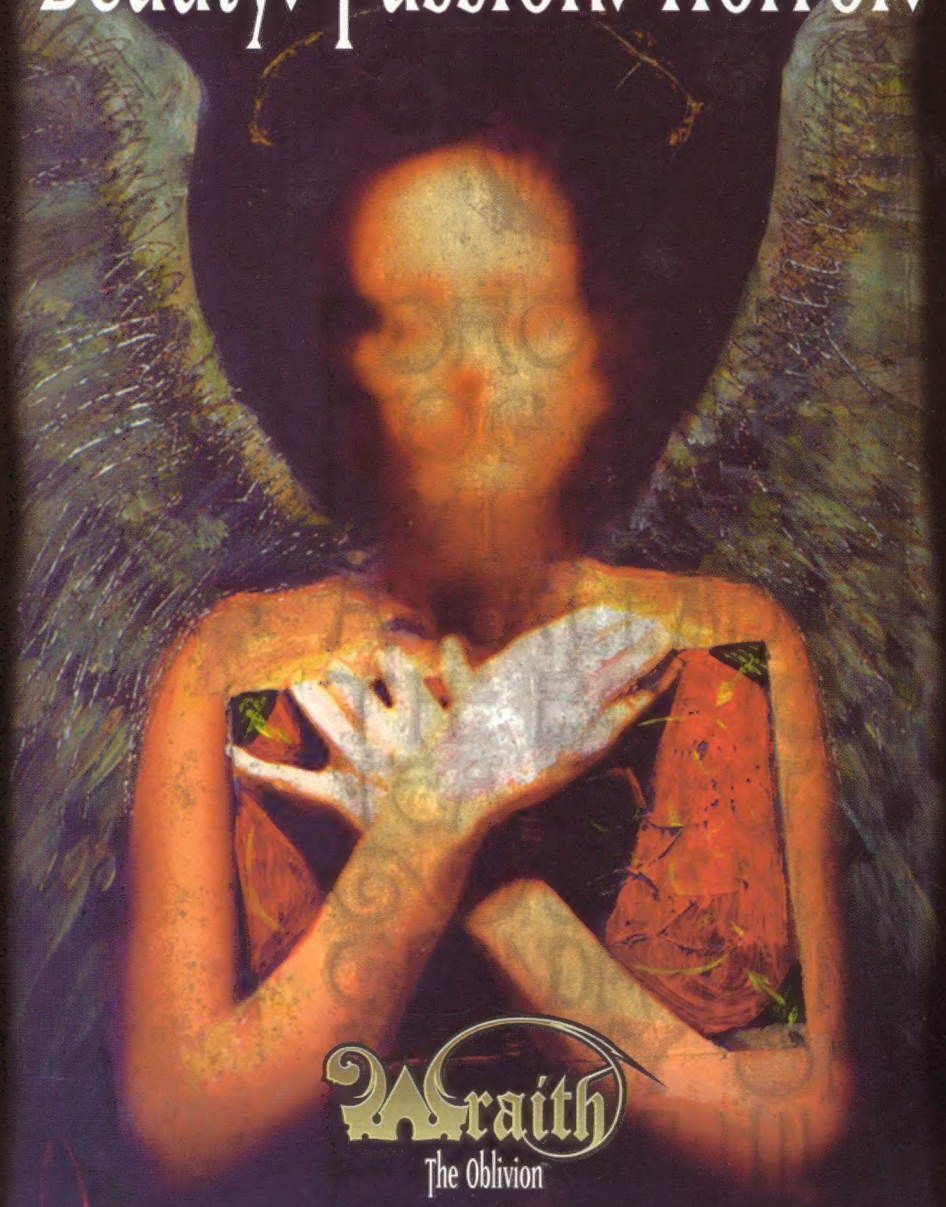

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